Killer's Quest For Freedom

Bid for furlough sparks debate over insanity defense

First of two parts

By Jamie Talan
STAFF WRITER

Albert Fentress rises early, before the din of each new day at the Kings Park Psychiatric Center, hoping to claim a clean shower stall ahead of the 35 other patients who sleep on locked Ward 122. At breakfast, his eyes sweep the room, gauging where he can eat without being threatened with a breakfast knife, or sit without watching someone cough up the morning fare. When he leaves, he must find a staffer with a key to open a thick metal door with no inside handle.

By 8 a.m., he is at work at the facility's computer learning center, a trim, polished man with wire-rimmed bifocals, pressed jeans, and an autumn tan acquired in late-day walks on the hospital grounds to a bluff that overlooks the bay. Often, staff members say, he'll work through lunch tutoring anyone who seeks his help, giving patients perhaps their best chance at surviving a future outside the psychiatric hospital.

To many of the mental health professionals at Kings Park, Albert Fentress is the most exemplary of patients — a quiet island of reserve, helpfulness and sanity in a difficult environment, a man finally at peace with himself.

To many of the hospital's neighbors and others, however, he is something quite different. While he may look and act the part of the fastidious, conscientious history teacher he was 15 years ago, Albert Fentress will remain in their minds the living embodiment of one of society's greatest taboos.

"Oh! The Cannibal?" Kings Park neighbor Melanie Haley says simply, descriptively, when asked about Fentress. "Just keep him locked up."

In August, 1979, Fentress — playing out a bizarre fantasy he had scripted days before — tied up a young man named Paul Masters in his Poughkeepsie home, mutilated him, shot him to death, then cooked parts of his body and apparently ate them. Ruled not guilty by reason of insanity, Fentress has spent his time since then receiving in-depth psychoanalysis and psychotherapy at two state mental hospitals.

> 'I have come to understand ... how I could have done such a horrible thing. Doctors tell me I am better, and I know I am.'


Fentress in the '70s

Now, at age 53, Fentress — in the first interview he's allowed — says he's sorry Paul Masters "stepped into a nightmare that destroyed him," but he adds that the nightmare he was back then — a psychotic man captured in the grip of a fearsome paranoia — no longer exists. Now, with 15 years of therapy behind him, Albert Fentress says emphatically that he wants and deserves his freedom, the first step being unsupervised visits to his parents' home, a 30-minute drive from the hospital.

"I have been through such pain over what I did," Fentress recently told a reporter. "Through treatment I have come to understand what happened to me, and how I could have done such a horrible thing. Doctors tell me I am better, and I know I am."

But Fentress also knows his quest, which already has hit some major roadblocks, won't be simple. While a dozen psychiatric professionals agree it's time to begin a process that eventually could free him, others — many others, including dozens of Kings Park residents, two state senators, several law enforcement officials and the psychiatrist they hired — disagree.

"I think he belongs in jail," says Gregory Szurnicki, a 71-year-old retired hospital employee and civic association leader who is opposing Fentress' release. "He beat the rap."

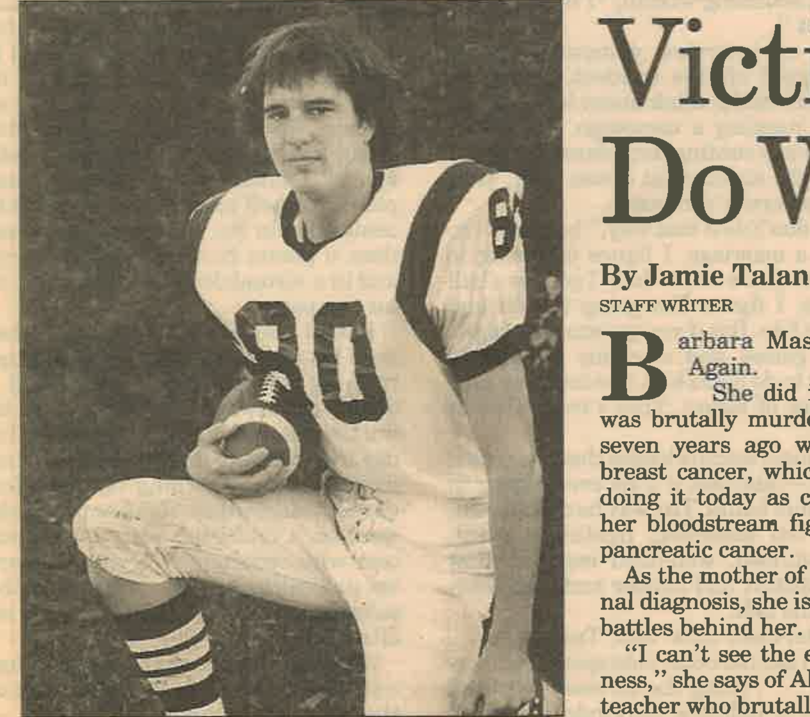
The face-off between the psychiatric community supporting Fentress and the community at large is an important one, experts say, because it goes to the very core of the state's rarely used insanity defense. The law says that a person ruled not guilty of a crime because of his mental state shouldn't be punished, but rather should be treated until he's no longer a public threat. And then, it says, he should be released, though it allows for conditions to that release.

There are 151 patients acquitted of various crimes by reason of insanity who are currently in secure forensic hospitals throughout the state. Fentress is one of the 300 others who are in non-secure hospitals, and 330 are placed in a conditional release program.

These numbers almost always remain constant as insanity-plea patients get better and move through the mental-health system.

Fentress' supporters argue that keeping him under constant supervision is both limiting his therapy and punishing him — a clear violation, they say, of the law's spirit and intent. Had he been found guilty of second-degree murder, he would have spent a minimum of 15 years in prison, meaning he would have been up for parole right now.

"A lot of people would like to see him drooling in a corner," said Joyce Fermo, a nurse administrator


Paul Masters in his varsity football uniform

Victim's Family: 'How Do We Know for Sure?'

By Jamie Talan
STAFF WRITER

Barbara Masters is staring down death. Again.

She did it 15 years ago when her son was brutally murdered by a stranger. She did it seven years ago when she was diagnosed with breast cancer, which is now in remission. She is doing it today as chemotherapy courses through her bloodstream fighting another lethal invader: pancreatic cancer.

As the mother of five makes peace with a terminal diagnosis, she is — admittedly — putting other battles behind her.

"I can't see the end of my life without forgiveness," she says of Albert Fentress, a former history teacher who brutally tortured and killed her youngest son a day from entering college. "But I don't think society should take a chance and let him out."

Paul Masters was an honor student who loved football. To mark his short life, an equipment shed that bears his name sits on the field at Spackenkill High School, just outside of Poughkeepsie. His football number — 80 — was never used again. Pictures of Paul — winner of a Regents scholarship, the boy who worked all summer to save $600 to help pay for college, the boy who loved cars — are scattered throughout his parents' home in San Jose, Calif.

On the 10th anniversary of his class reunion, she said, Paul's high school girlfriend delivered flowers to the Masters family. The next day they received a card from Paul's classmates.

They had all moved on in life. But in their memories, she said, Paul was still 18.

Since their son's death, Barbara and Burt Mas-

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Newsday / Julia Gaines

Fentress looks out a window of the Rehab building, where he works at the computer center

who has become one of a dozen ardent supporters of Fentress. "We tend to pick him apart and analyze every behavior. We don't hold ourselves to the standards we expect from him."

"They've had him under a microscope for so long, and he has never shown any troubling behavior," says Dr. John Baer Train, one of dozens of psychiatrists who have examined and / or treated Fentress. "His treatment was excellent. He is no longer mentally ill or dangerous."

Dr. Cemil Bikmen, a psychiatrist who treated Fentress for more than a year, argues that the law as constituted puts psychiatry itself on trial, along with the patient. He and other doctors recommended that Fentress be allowed unsupervised visits with his parents, he says, but "the system didn't trust me" and the court turned them down.

Others argue that there are no guarantees the demons that caused Fentress to snap in the first place are gone — medical reports or no medical reports. "It is very difficult to predict future dangerousness," says John Monahan, a professor of law and psychology at the University of Virginia.

Last month, Suffolk County Court Judge Alfred Tisch ruled Fentress shouldn't be allowed the unsupervised visits despite testimony from six psychiatric professionals urging such visits. Only one doctor, hired by the Dutchess County district attorney's office, testified that Fentress could still be a danger to society.

Tisch, who has received dozens of letters from Kings Park residents opposing the release, made his ruling without explanation, according to Leslie De-Lia, a lawyer from the Mental Hygiene Legal Service who represents Fentress.

Tisch's law clerk, Ira Simon, acknowledged, however, that the decision was a difficult one: 'You've got to take into consideration the nature of the crime," Simon argued. "These are gut-wrenching, God-like decisions."

Now, Fentress has been told that while the hospital still formally supports his bid, no new action is planned — leaving him in a no man's land with no apparent exit.

Noting that he's seen many insanity-plea patients leave the hospital over the years, Fentress said, "these decisions are made with the greatest care.

'You've got to take into consideration the nature of the crime. These are gut-wrenching, God-like decisions.'

— Ira Simon, law clerk to Suffolk County Court Judge Alfred Tisch

Take them small, take them as slow as you want, I've always said. But just give me a chance."

* * *

To look at Albert Fentress, to hear an intelligent and thoughtful man talk about his search to understand how he could so brutally murder and cannibalize a stranger, is to question the very nature of sanity.

Can humans just snap? Can mental illness come on so suddenly, exploding in a violent thunder and disappearing as quickly? Or was there some deep-rooted pathology that was covered up for so long by the structure of a successful life?

And, most importantly, are there treatments for such dark and puzzling emotions that can guarantee such bizarre, destructive behavior won't be repeated? Train, the forensic psychiatrist who has examined Fentress extensively five times since 1980, thinks so.

"The dissociative psychosis that occurred in 1979 is completely resolved with in-depth insight into its psychodynamics," Train told a court in 1988.

It's unclear if all the doctors within the state system who have seen Fentress agree. But some other experts, even other psychiatric professionals, aren't so sure. "The truth is only as accurate as a person is willing to share," said Robert Prentky, a forensic psychologist in Philadelphia. "We have all made mistakes."

Prentky, who has treated hundreds of violent sex offenders, speaks from experience. He recently signed off on a Massachusetts inmate who he thought was a model patient. When the inmate was released the next year, he murdered two women.

There are no easy answers. But Fentress — as much as any one person possibly can — illustrates the questions and issues surrounding the often controversial and confusing insanity plea.

Lean and athletic, clean and well-dressed, scholarly and conscientious, Fentress runs the hospital's computer program, was once editor of the facility's newsletter, and is an ardent advocate for his fellow patients. Doctors say he doesn't break rules and that he has never acted out in a violent way — in many ways, they say, he is the picture of normality.

Born in Brooklyn on July 20, 1941, Albert Francis Fentress' early childhood was spent in Venezuela, during which time his father, an engineer, supervised an oil field. After seven years, however, the family returned to New York and bought land in Suffolk County, beginning a small tomato farm.

Fentress, who agreed to be interviewed but not to release his medical records, said he was an honor student at that point who filled his afternoons with music, debating and drama. On the weekend, he worked on the family farm. He tells doctors that his relationship with his mother was warm and supportive but that his father was strict.

In 1965, after obtaining a master's degree in education and history, Fentress began teaching high school history in Poughkeepsie, buying a small ranch home on Grand Avenue. Despite his modest teacher's salary, he had an expensive stamp collection, a Rolex watch, a collection of historical signatures, crystal, antiques and a penchant for Cadillacs.

He loved teaching. And former students say they would never forget his classes.

"He became a character in the lesson," said Elizabeth Schwartz, a former student. Sometimes, he would dress in Civil War gear, she said. For a discussion of racism, he'd wear a Ku Klux Klan robe to show how frightening it was.

Fentress, who never married, said in a recent interview that his paranoia began to take shape in 1978, when some kids broke into his home and stole his prized stamp collection. Even though the local police managed to get the stamps back, he became

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frightened and paranoid, and bought a gun.

"I realized how fragile I was — my house and my furnishings — to be the best dressed," he says now. "I couldn't exist without them."

Later, he said, the students broke into his home on more than a dozen occasions, poured chemicals on his lawn, and sent magazine subscriptions to his home. He thinks they continued the harassment because their names were linked to the stolen stamps, and because other students were annoyed at them.

Although it wasn't apparent publicly, Fentress said, he was beginning to feel pressure emotionally as the vandalism destroyed possessions that helped him feel successful. On Friday, Aug. 18, 1979, Fentress found himself writing a bizarre fantasy of revenge. After two hours, his arm cramped. He remembers reading the script, then burning the papers.

On Sunday, however, he started writing again and, after three hours, realized he had written an equally horrifying script. He burned it, too.

A few hours later, he would meet Paul Masters, who was hanging out with friends on his last night in Poughkeepsie before entering college. Masters, 18, who had played football at a nearby high school, had been drinking with a group of friends when players from rival teams got into a fight, according to police accounts. When police responded, the young men started running and Masters wound up on Fentress' lawn.

Fentress ran out with his licensed .38-caliber pistol hidden under his shirt, confronting Masters.

"I told him to move on," Fentress recalled.

Moments later, Fentress said, Masters ran onto a service road on the back of his property. After a few nervous moments, they talked, even drinking vodka together. Eventually, Masters said he needed a ride home, and Fentress offered his help.

But things changed quickly at that point. Fentress went inside for his car keys, and saw the basement light on. His rigid need for order meant that lights were never left on, and his paranoia returned.

Armed with his gun, he brought Masters down to the basement. There, he tied him to a basement pole, sexually abused him, castrated him, and shot him twice in the head. Then he cooked the genitals, and apparently ate them.

The bizarre fantasy he had been writing earlier that day simply came alive, he says now: "While this [the attack] was going on, I kept saying, 'This is the script . . . this is the script,' " he recalled. "I was screaming in my head, 'Why is this happening? It's the script.' "

Later, psychiatric reports would say that Fentress could not deal with stress that had been building in his mind since the theft of his stamps a year before. "It undermined the carefully constructed image which masked his anxieties and protected him from fears," Train said. "Also contributing to the stress was Fentress' discovery that he had homosexual tendencies."

Fentress believes that he so totally repressed his homosexual urgings that he had to destroy the young man's genitals. "By destroying it, you eat it," he said. "There was no decision there."

In the aftermath, police searched his house for other signs that would reveal a dark and sinister history of sadism, but there were none. "If you knew him before, you would have never known," said Roland Witherwax, the detective sergeant who handled the report of Fentress' stolen stamps and the murder.

* * *

Albert Fentress spent the first 15 months after his arrest in jail without special psychiatric treatment.

During this time, court records show, Fentress' attorney tried to have the murder charges dropped on a technicality. He charged that lawyer-client confidentiality was breached when the mother of the attorney Fentress called after the attack summoned police.

The argument was rejected, then appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, which denied the application.

To this day, however, Paul Masters' mother, Barbara, says that this argument made her uncertain as to just how insane he was. "If it was genuine, why didn't he do it [seek the insanity plea] from the beginning?" she asks.

Once Fentress' lawyer put forth an insanity defense, he was examined by psychiatrists employed by the prosecution and the defense, and both sides agreed he was insane at the time of the murder.

After a two-day hearing, the judge agreed as well, finding Fentress not guilty by reason of insanity.

There has been some form of the insanity defense since the Middle Ages. The law argues that because of a mental illness, a person either didn't know his criminal behavior was wrong or was unable to stop himself. Thus, he should be treated for his illness, not punished for his actions.

In 1980, Fentress was one of 79 defendants charged with a number of different crimes in New York State to claim the defense. Nationally, experts say, there are about two insanity pleas attempted for every 1,000 felony arrests, and only 25 percent of those attempts are successful.

In most cases in which it is successful, including Fentress' case, the defense is quickly accepted by both sides because of the nature of the psychiatric testimony. Otherwise, the case goes before a jury to weigh what are often subtle, complicated diagnoses from competing experts. Then, according to many legal experts, the situation tends



'A lot of people would like to see him drooling in a corner. ... We don't hold ourselves to the standards we expect from him.'

— Joyce Fermo, nurse administrator



Barbara Masters, left, with Paul, her youngest of five children

'Can't Play God'

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ters have traveled to every hearing that was held for Albert Fentress. They were there when he requested a transfer to a non-secure facility. They were there when the state applied for escorted furloughs. And most recently, Barbara Masters flew 3,000 miles to fight Fentress' request for unescorted furloughs.

"If we didn't get involved, he would be on the street again," said Masters, who celebrated her 44th wedding anniversary this year.

But now, she said she is tired and sick, and she doesn't feel the fight in her anymore. "We can't play God," she said. "As far as I'm concerned, if there is another hearing, we have fought enough."

Among his family and doctors, Fentress has wept openly about killing Paul Masters. But on the numerous occasions that Fentress has been in court, the Masterses said that he stared forward, seemingly without emotion. They said they have never felt any remorse from the man whose every legal battle brings them to court.

"He may be completely cured. He may be remorseful. He may never do this again. But how do we know for sure?" said Paul's father, who teaches engineering.

"Psychiatry is such an inexact science," his wife adds. "We would do anything to make sure this doesn't happen to another family."

The Masters also suggest that Fentress must have plenty to hide since his lawyers have done everything legally possible to keep the public from hearing any medical testimony in his case. Fentress' lawyer filed a pre-trial motion arguing that the public should not have access to confidential clinical material presented in court.

The family has never had access to any hospital files on Fentress.

Paul Masters was the youngest of five children. He loved baseball, track and football. He was on the varsity football team throughout high school and was hoping to play as a student at the State University of New York at Albany. Paul had a penchant for beat-up cars. "He loved to fix them," his father said. "He'd buy cheap cars and spend hours working on them."

He also loved camping.

Barbara Masters was never the kind of mother who relaxed when her children were out for the evening. Every siren would wake her. "I'd put the pillow over my head and pray."

Then, on August 20, 1979, the knock on the door in the middle of the night came with shocking news that their son had been shot and killed. Later, as the case unwound, the couple would learn the gruesome details that Fentress not only castrated their son, but ate his genitals.

"It was hard to get all the images of the torture out of my mind," Barbara Master's wrote in a journal she has kept since Paul's death.

During the first Christmas after Paul's death, Barbara took out his football and uniform and scores of pictures. She built a shrine to her son in the living room, around the Christmas tree.

The day that Fentress was found not guilty by reason of insanity, the couple piled into a aging Volkswagen Bug and drove to California. Burt Masters had worked for IBM and gladly accepted a transfer.

They moved into a condominium next to a church, which would be the beginning of Barbara Masters' healing. The Catholic priest provided counseling, helping the grieving mother say goodbye to her son.

She also became involved with a local chapter of Parents of Murdered Children and has maintained a letter-writing campaign to congressmen and friends in New York.

"Our religion and faith helped a lot," she said during a recent interview. "I feel pressured to do something."

She is now undergoing chemotherapy. She says she is beating the odds. Doctors told her last summer that she had only a few months to live. The couple recently took a trip to Alaska and continue making plans to see their children and grandchildren. "There is so much to live for," she added.

Debate on Insanity Defense

to favor the prosecution because the only inarguable fact remaining is that a crime was committed.

Additionally, defense attorneys are well aware of studies that show that if they lose with an insanity defense, their clients usually end up with longer jail terms.

After Fentress was ruled not guilty, he was remanded to the custody of the state Office of Mental Health and transferred to Mid-Hudson Psychiatric Center, a maximum-security hospital in New Hampton, N.Y.

There, he would be provided with therapists to cure what doctors originally suspected was a paranoid schizophrenic disorder, which was later dismissed. Any privileges that extended beyond the hospital walls first would have to go through the Office of Mental Health in Albany, and then through the courts.

At Mid-Hudson, Fentress eventually found a therapist — Robert Weltman — who helped him begin to put the pieces of his life together. After five years, at the doctor's urging, the state successfully petitioned the court to transfer him to a non-secure facility. He was sent to Kings Park.

There, he met John Pruslow, an education administrator who immediately welcomed his teaching experience.

Pruslow was just setting up a few new computers for the patients' use when Fentress arrived. Soon, Fentress began teaching on them, and eventually became editor of a patient newsletter.

"He's shown himself to be extremely competent, responsible and compassionate for others," said Pruslow, who is now education director at Sagamore Children's Center.

At the same time, however, Fentress says he became a target of resentment for some at the facility — both because of his past, and because he felt it was important to stand up for his rights and the rights of other patients there.

He'd ask for quiet in the wee hours of the night when staff would chat loudly in the large ward of sleeping men. He'd ask a staff member to take a urine-soaked patient to the showers. He'd give an emphatic "No!" when staff demanded that patients clean up garbage on the employee parking lot prior to a state inspection.

For years, he sat on the hospital's patient advisory board, a group that met monthly to discuss problems. "Sometimes, there is such little respect for patients," said Fentress.

While his therapists saw improvements in Fentress, rewarding him with extended privileges, others became more and more upset with him, he says.

"I no sooner got my first treatment pass [which meant he could walk unattended on the grounds of the 596-acre hospital] and I was reported driving recklessly down the boulevard [the main road through the hospital] in a therapy aide's car," Fentress recalls.

Then, community residents and hospital staff members began complaining to administrators that Fentress had been seen in town unsupervised, which is forbidden without the court's approval.

"It was ridiculous," recalls Pruslow, who said that he always knew Fentress could be found peering into a computer monitor. "I'd get calls from the unit. 'Fentress is in town.' I'd say, 'That's impossible. He's right here.' "

One day a colleague told Pruslow that she had "just passed Al's twin on Landing Avenue." Fentress, meanwhile, was sitting nearby.

Over the years, a dozen other staff members reported seeing the twin — even the hospital director. Finally, one administrator who thought he saw Fentress at Cheap John's in Kings Park followed him.

"At first glance, he looked just like him," said the administrator, who asked that his name not be used. "But then, when he came closer, it just wasn't him." He followed the "double" and saw that he went into an apartment across the street.

Community activists have also reported Fentress walking alone in town.

The frequent reports led Judge Tisch in 1990 to remove Fentress' grounds privileges, though there was no formal investigation into the allegations. This was done during a routine retention hearing, held every two years to determine whether patients are still mentally ill and require hospitalization. On appeal, the court reversed Tisch's decision, saying he had no legal right to alter treatment privileges on the grounds of the hospital.

It took nine months, however, for the appeal to be successful.

"I felt very badly for Al," said June Lanzer, a Kings Park resident and former hospital employee who has known Fentress since he arrived at Kings Park. When she ran an occupational therapy workshop at the hospital, she said, Fentress was part of her program.

"We had locked rooms with anywhere from twenty to forty people," she said. "I depended on Al to help me. Patients respected him and he could sometimes calm them down quicker than I could. I just felt more secure with him there."

"There are two camps of people" at the hospital who take notice of Fentress, explains Sheldon Friedman, a hospital psychologist who has treated him since 1989. "Those who hate him and those who don't."

In fact, Fentress has made a lot of friends among staff, which means a lot of small perks, in the guise of treatment, comes his way. Twice a month, for instance, a nurse taking a dinner break accompanies him to a nearby supermarket to pick up snacks he then sells to other patients at the hospital.

He also joins other patients on supervised summer beach trips and feasts on lobster overlooking the Port Jefferson harbor. Usually, two staff members accompany half a dozen patients. He's been to the Statue of Liberty, the Museum of Modern Art, Ellis Island.

He also has glimmers of freedom when he is allowed, with the blessing of his doctor and the hospital, to visit his family with supervision once a week.

On one cool October afternoon, he is cooking a roast, whipping squash and baking two apple pies — one for the neighbors. He spends the afternoon weeding overgrown gardens and tending his family's two-acre tomato farm. Once inside the cozy two-story house, Ursula Lisnoff, the therapy aide who is charged with supervising him, makes her secret recipe for potato pancakes while Fentress prepares fresh applesauce.

Fentress' mother is recovering from hip surgery. His parents show a reporter pictures of their three children when they were young, and their grandchildren. A Ray Charles tape pipes through the house.

While Lisnoff has become more like family during these home visits, she says that Fentress "doesn't need escorted visits. There's never been anything out of the ordinary."

At the hospital, meanwhile, Fentress has started a printing business, offering a variety of desktop publishing services.

In the morning, students come to the computer lab to learn Word Perfect and Quark Express programs. He spends the afternoon working on posters, wedding invitations or business cards. Fentress gets paid $100 for his 50-hour week, the same wages he earned sealing military emblems at the hospital's occupational therapy unit.

Fentress bypasses the institutional supper most afternoons. He calls the unit to let them know where he is, and heads for what he sees as his own quiet little corner of the facility: a bluff that overlooks the harbor. There, he watches the people move about on their boats, free to enjoy themselves.

Last year, Fentress got his own room, with a bed, desk and dresser. It is one of only two single rooms in the 36-bed unit. His parents have since given him an air-conditioner, and he keeps a VCR and his collection of tapes locked in a trunk under his bed.

When he has to be indoors, he spends most of his time here, reading books, keeping a journal, watching his all-time favorite movie, "Casablanca."

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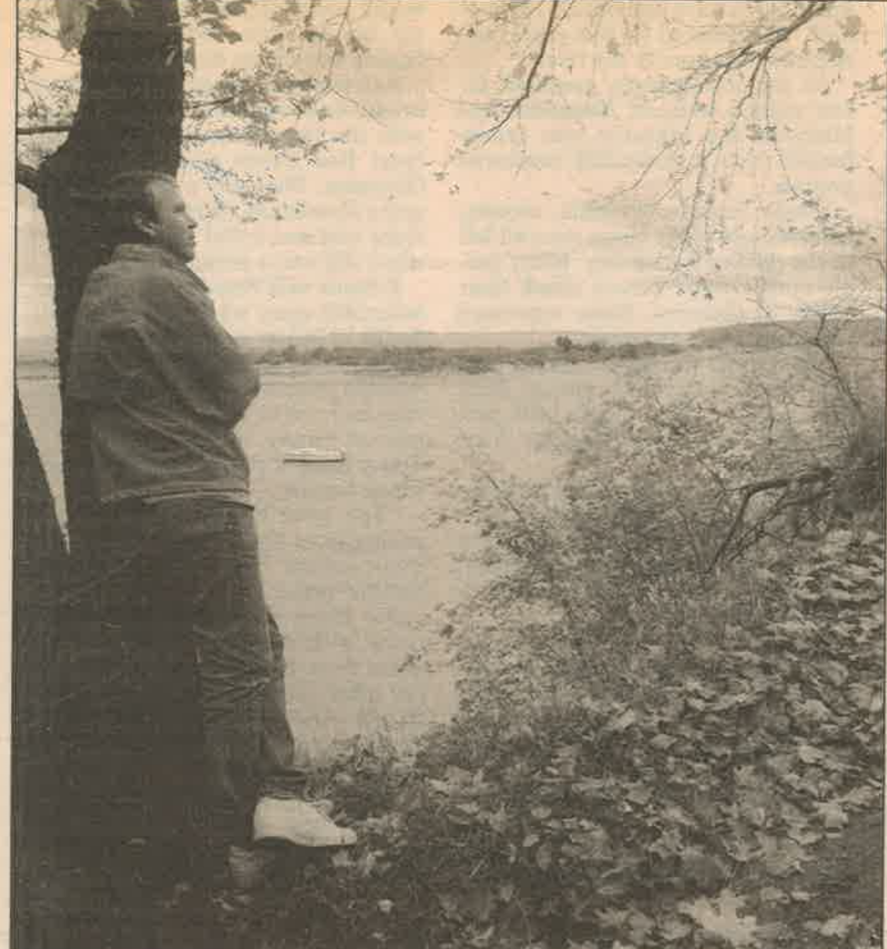
The psychiatric reports on Albert Fentress are voluminous.

The therapists who have studied and treated Fentress believe that he was acutely psychotic during the crime, but suffers now from a more ordinary personality disorder. His diagnoses: obsessive / compulsive disorder and narcissistic personality disorder.

Friedman, his psychologist, calls Fentress "near normal. If I had to make a choice, release him. But it must be contingent on continued monitoring and therapy. The stresses in the world are different than they are in here."

Everyone has a different theory on how someone can have a fleeting psychotic episode — just long enough to brutally kill and cannibalize someone — and within weeks or months return to a high functioning state, free of any

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Newsday / Julia Gaines
Fentress spends most afternoons at what he sees as his own quiet corner of the facility: a bluff on the hospital grounds that overlooks the harbor.


Fentress, shown more than 15 years ago, teaches a high school history class in Poughkeepsie dressed in Civil War gear to illustrate the lesson.

NEWSDAY, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 7, 1993

A Victim's Parents Plead: No Furlough

By Elizabeth Wasserman
STAFF WRITER

Fourteen years after Albert Fentress Jr. was acquitted by reason of insanity for the mutilation and murder of a Poughkeepsie teen, the victim's parents yesterday pleaded with a state judge not to allow a man they termed "an extremely dangerous psychopath" unsupervised visitation at his parents' Melville home.

"I don't want this to happen to another mother," Barbara Masters told a Riverhead court through tears. "I really think society should not take another chance with this man."

In 1979, her son Paul, 18, a recent high school graduate, ducked into Fentress' yard, in Poughkeepsie, to hide after a fight with students from a rival school. Fentress invited Masters in for a drink, then tied him to a basement post at gunpoint, sexually abused and mutilated him, shot him twice in the head and cooked and ate his genitals.

During the mother's emotional plea yesterday, Fentress listened unemotionally in the courtroom.

The remarks came during the opening of an unusual hearing into a recommendation by the state Mental Health Commissioner and doctors at Kings Park Psychiatric Center, where Fentress lives, that Fentress be allowed unescorted visits with his family.

The hearing is apparently the first in the state in which a person acquitted of murder by reason of insanity has been recommended for unsupervised furloughs

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Newsday / John H. Cornell Jr.
Barbara and Burt Masters hold picture of son Robert, who was killed by Albert Fentress.

Plea From Parents

FURLOUGH from Page 7

in the community, despite the district attorney's objections, according to court papers.

State Supreme Court Justice Alfred Tisch, who is presiding over the nonjury proceeding, has been asked to authorize up to two visits per month, for periods of up to 12 hours at a time.

The request is being opposed by the Dutchess County district attorney's office, which originally prosecuted Fentress' case, on the grounds that Fentress is a potential danger to the community. Assistant District Attorney Wayne Witherwax said in court yesterday that, based on Fentress' psychiatric condition, visits without the supervision of a trained professional would be "inappropriate at the present time."

Since last year, Fentress, 53, has been visiting his parents accompanied by a hospital staff member, but if the application is granted, his parents or other close relatives will be able to sign him out for extended visits without any escorts. A psychiatrist at Kings Park testified yesterday that the family members will be given a "hotline" to call the hospital in the event of an emergency.

Poughkeepsie Journal Photo
Albert Fentress

The first of at least nine expert witnesses in psychiatry or psychology testified yesterday that it was his opinion that Fentress should be allowed the visits. Dr. M. Sabanayagam, a psychiatrist at Kings Park Psychiatric Center, said that Fentress was initially diagnosed as a schizophrenic when he was confined to Mid-Hudson Psychiatric Center after his plea. Later, the doctor testified, that diagnosis was changed to "brief reactive psychosis" — a condition that occurs under stress — and his diagnosis has been consistent since he was transferred to Kings Park in 1985. Most of the testimony about Fentress' current diagnosis and treatment is closed to the public.

In a memorandum of law, Tisch indicated that the issue of "what is the standard of proof and who has the burden of proof" in furlough and discharge proceedings in such a case is an issue that has never before been litigated in New York. As such, Tisch ordered the proponents of Fentress' furlough — the state — to bear the burden of proving that, by a preponderance of the evidence, a furlough order is warranted by Fentress' clinical condition and that it would be consistent with the public safety and welfare of the community.

FROM PAGE ONE

Fentress: Murderer seeks furloughs

Continued

in the head. He then ate some of the body parts.

The Poughkeepsie Middle School teacher was found not guilty of murder by reason of insanity in November 1980. The psychiatrists said he was a paranoid schizophrenic. The judge who shipped him off to a maximum-security hospital said he was "all but incurable."

Fentress' doctors now say he was never schizophrenic, but rather suffered a brief psychotic episode triggered by stress.

He was transferred to minimum-security Kings Park Psychiatric Center in 1985. In the past year, he has been allowed to make several supervised visits to his parents' home in nearby Melville. Now the state says he's ready to leave the facility twice a month, for 12 hours a day, with only his relatives to watch over him.

Fentress must prove health

Dutchess County prosecutors are fighting the proposal. Senior Assistant District Attorney Wayne Witherwax told Tisch that Fentress is still dangerous.

In a precedent-setting decision, Tisch said it's up to the proponents of the furloughs to prove otherwise.

Parts of the hearing are closed to the public to protect Fentress' right to patient-doctor confidentiality.

Fentress' lawyers and the state attorney general's office plan to call eight psychiatrists and psychologists to testify in support of unescorted furloughs.

"extremely" dangerous psychopath. "If Fentress appears better, it's because he has learned to mask his illness," Masters said.

"I'd like to ask those who would promote (his) release to honestly answer the question of whether or not it would ever be possible for him to again victimize an innocent, unthreatening person such as Paul," he said.

But proponents of the furloughs need not offer a guarantee — only evidence showing that Fentress probably won't hurt anyone.

"Mere speculation as to what might go wrong is not a reason to disagree" with the recommendation for unescorted furloughs, argued Leslie DeLia, an attorney representing Fentress for Mental Health Legal Services. "Rehashing the events of 14 years ago is not a reason to disagree."

A few minutes later, Burt Masters stepped outside the courtroom and sighed. "You kind of wonder if Fentress is the only one who's insane here," he said.



Newsday/Special to the Poughkeepsie Journal

Burt and Barbara Masters hold a picture of their son Paul outside a hearing Monday that may allow his killer to have furloughs.

Assistant D.A. was Fentress' student

By Matt Fitzsimons
Poughkeepsie Journal

Twenty years ago, long before one became a killer and the other a prosecutor, Albert Fentress and Wayne Witherwax knew each other as teacher and student.

Fentress was a well-respected faculty member at Poughkeepsie Middle School.

was home from college when his father, City of Poughkeepsie police Detective Sgt. Roland Witherwax, got the call.

Albert Fentress had just killed Paul Masters, an 18-year-old Spackenkill High School graduate.

In the months ahead, Witherwax heard the gruesome rumors. More than a year passed

these were the actual facts.'

Earlier this year, District Attorney William Grady needed someone to take over the case. The prosecutor who had been handling it, Thomas Dolan, was now a Dutchess County judge. Witherwax volunteered to pick up where Dolan left off.

The reason, he said, was because he already knew all the

LONG ISLAND

After 17 Years, Killer Wants Out

By Chau Lam
STAFF WRITER

Although Albert Fentress, a former history teacher who killed a student and ate the body parts, shows no overt signs of suffering from mental illness, a psychiatrist testified yesterday in Riverhead that Fentress is not well enough to be released from Kings Park Psychiatric Center in Brentwood.

"If certain stresses exist, he may again lose control and become aggressive and become hostile," said Abraham L. Halpern, the psychiatrist and critic of the insanity defense hired to examine Fentress.


Paul Masters

Accompanied by a hospital worker, Fentress, 55, walked into Judge John Vaughn's courtroom yesterday to hear the first day of testimony in the hearing to determine whether Fentress should be conditionally released. The hearing in Suffolk County Court is expected to last a few more days.

"I want to speak very much, but I am told I can't," Fentress said as he left the courthouse yesterday.

Fentress' mental illness has been controlled with drugs and other treatments, but his mental state remains the same as it was 17 years ago when he castrated and killed Paul Masters, 17, of Poughkeepsie, said John M. Stolfi, assistant attorney general with Dennis C. Vacco's office, which, along with the Dutchess County district attorney's office, is petitioning Vaughn to keep Fentress at Kings Park for further treatment.

"Remission does not mean a cure. Remission means his conditions have been put under control," Stolfi said.


Newsday Photos / John H. Cornell Jr.
Albert Fentress, who's seeking release from psychiatric hospital, in Riverhead court yesterday.

John M. Stolfi, assistant attorney general


Kim Darrow, attorney representing Fentress

Reminding the court that the hearing is a civil proceeding to determine whether Fentress is ready to be released, Kim Darrow, a lawyer with the State Mental Hygiene Legal Services, representing Fentress, asked that it not be used to punish him.

"It's not a criminal trial . . . It's not about whether we like the insanity defense," Darrow said.

Since 1980, when a jury found him guilty by reason of insanity for killing Masters, Fentress has been receiving psychiatric treatment. The insanity defense argues that because of a mental illness, a person either didn't know his criminal behavior was wrong or was unable to stop himself. According to the law, he should be treated for his illness, not punished for his actions.

The same year, Fentress entered the Mid Hudson Psychiatric Center in New Hampton and in 1985 he was transferred to Kings Park because doctors determined that Fentress was no longer considered dangerous, Darrow said. Fentress lives there.

For the last six or seven years, a hospital employee has driven Fentress to his father's house in Melville twice a week and stayed with Fentress during the six-hour visits. With state budget cutbacks, Fentress' trips home were scaled back to once a week, Darrow said.

Fentress is free to walk around hospital grounds by himself. He teaches computers to other patients at Kings Park and its staff members, who said Fentress is doing an outstanding job, Darrow said.

In 1993, Fentress lost a court battle to have unsupervised visits.

In a hearing that occurs every two years, the state has to prove why Fentress should remain hospitalized. Yesterday's appearance by Fentress was the first time he had asked the court to release him with conditions such as submitting to treatment and reporting to the court periodically, Darrow said.

However, Vacco and the Dutchess County district attorney yesterday said Fentress is not ready to be released, arguing that the stress of living in society will trigger a breakdown, similar to when Fentress killed Masters.

But Darrow argued that Fentress has handled stress successfully. For example, when community protesters formed a human chain near the hospital a few years ago to demonstrate their desire to keep Fentress there, Fentress dealt with the stress, Darrow said.

DOE to Test Residents' Wells Near Lab

By Joe Haberstroh
STAFF WRITER

The U.S. Department of Energy will test the water of residents near Brookhaven National Laboratory who are concerned that their private wells may have been contaminated by the lab.

In the past 18 months, the department already had agreed to spend at least $8 million to hook up to the public-water supply system three neighborhoods south of the lab complex in Upton. Still, many people who live outside those neighborhoods have sought reassurance from the government that their water is safe.

And since a leak of radioactive tritium forced the shutdown of the laboratory's main nuclear reactor in mid-January, about 20 residents a day have asked the Bureau of Drinking Water at the Suffolk Health Department for well-water testing, said Paul Ponturo, bureau supervisor.

The calls have come to the health department even though the tritium plume's leading edge is more than a mile from residences and in concentrations well within government drinking-water safety levels. However, at least five other underground chemical plumes — associated with past laboratory practices — have migrated off the Brookhaven site.

"We've even gotten calls from people who live in Nassau County," said Ponturo. "It's been almost nonstop."

Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R-Island Park) and U.S. Rep. Michael Forbes (R-Quogue) asked the Energy Department in March to do the additional testing. The department agreed Friday.

"Although the Environmental Protection Agency and the Suffolk County Department of Health Services continue to state that the contamination poses no public health threat, it is understandable that the residents want reassurance of this," wrote Tara O'Toole, an assistant secretary of the Energy Department, in a letter to D'Amato and Forbes.

The lab has launched a variety of cleanup projects to prevent its contaminations from spreading to nearby drinking water. But the public's shaken confidence in the lab demanded additional governmental response, said Forbes.

"But what I was hearing from local citizens groups is they were concerned whether they could trust the information that has been put out on the testing of the wells," Forbes said.

The laboratory has acknowledged that the equipment in its analytical testing office has had difficulty in gauging low levels of tritium in water samples.

At each of the two most recent meetings of the Yaphank Civic Association, members have wondered about the purity of their water, said Nanette Essel, the association's co-president.

"People here still have a fear about their water, although Yaphank is southwest of the lab, and actually sort of out of the loop for where the particular concerns are occurring," said Essel, who added that she approved of the testing plan.

No formal system has been set up to do the water testing. Tentatively, the county's Bureau of Drinking Water will handle the testing, with the Energy Department picking up the $65 per-test fee, said Ponturo.

Officials plan to take the testing requests case-by-case. While they don't plan to test everyone's water, they said they would try to accommodate as many residents as staffing allows.

11/21/98

Killer appeals to jury for release

By Larry Fisher-Hertz
Poughkeepsie Journal

RIVERHEAD, Suffolk County — A former Poughkeepsie school teacher who mutilated and killed a teenager in 1979 is making another bid for freedom from a mental institution.

Albert Fentress, 57, will ask a jury to overturn a Sept. 23 ruling by Suffolk County Court Judge John Vaughn, who found Fentress was still too dangerous to be set free. The hearing before a state Supreme Court justice in Suffolk County is scheduled to begin Jan. 26.

Fentress

Fentress, a former Poughkeepsie Middle School history teacher, admitted killing 18-year-old Paul Masters in the basement of his Grand Avenue home on Aug. 20, 1979. He lured Masters into his home, tied him to a post at gunpoint, sexually mutilated him and shot him twice in the head.

Fentress was found not guilty by reason of insanity in 1980 and has been confined in institutions ever since, the last 15 years at Kings Park Psychiatric Center in Suffolk County. He works at the institution's computer center and has been permitted since 1993 to make escorted visits to relatives in nearby Long Island communities.

The January hearing will mark the third time in 20 months that Fentress has sought his freedom.

Judge Vaughn also ruled following a three-day hearing in April 1997 that he should not be released.

Under state law, patients who have been found not guilty in criminal cases by rea-

Please see **Fentress**, 2A

Fentress: Jurors will decide appeal

Continued from 1A

son of insanity are potentially eligible for release every two years. It is up to the state to convince a judge or jury the patient is not ready to be released.

The law also permits patients to have juries hear their appeals if judges rule against them.

Dutchess County Senior Assistant District Attorney Wayne Witherwax, who is prosecuting the case along with the state Attorney General's office, said Fentress' attorneys did not state their reason for objecting to Judge Vaughn's decision.

"We believe there should be a reason cited for any appeal," Witherwax said Friday, "but under state law, (patients) only have to argue they were 'dissatisfied' with the ruling in order to be granted an appeal."

Witherwax said Fentress would be interviewed by at least two state-appointed psychiatrists between now and the start of the hearing. He said he expected Fentress' attorney, Kim Darrow of Mental Hygiene Legal Services, to call at least three expert witnesses. Darrow declined to comment on the case Friday.

A psychologist who treats Fentress, Lawrence Panza, testified at the September hearing that Fentress was ready for a transfer to a community residence located on the grounds of Kings Park. He said this partial step back into the community would provide adequate structure for Fentress while preparing him for living on his own.

But two psychiatrists and one psychologist who examined Fentress earlier this year all testified that the risks were too great to consider releasing Fentress from the hospital.

News from
Attorney General
Dennis C. Vacco

att: WRW
from: KFM

Good job!

The Capitol
Albany, New York 12224

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FOR RELEASE: Immediate, Wednesday, April 16, 1997

VACCO HAILS JUDGE'S RULING TO RETAIN CANNIBAL KILLER

Attorney General Dennis C. Vacco today hailed a judge's decision to retain Albert Fentress, the former Hudson Valley high school teacher who killed and cannibalized a teenager, in a state mental hospital.

Suffolk County Court Judge John V. Vaughn rejected Fentress' effort to win a conditional release from the Kings Park Psychiatric Hospital after spending 17 years in the state's care.

"I am pleased that Judge Vaughn agreed with my position that Albert Fentress is far too dangerous to release into the community," Attorney General Vacco said.

"Albert Fentress is a seriously mentally ill person who needs continued care and supervision -- not to be thrust into a world he no longer recognizes where he will face stresses with which he may not be able to cope," Attorney General Vacco said.

Judge Vaughn's decision came after a three-day hearing which featured expert testimony from doctors who contended that Fentress' mental state is unchanged from 1979, when he castrated, killed and cannibalized the young boy.

Attorney General Vacco said the Fentress case highlights the need to study changes in the state laws concerning the treatment of the criminally insane.

Under current law, criminally insane patients at state mental hospitals are eligible for release every two years, unless the state proves that they should be retained.

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SUNDAY, APRIL 13, 1997 SINCE 1785 ■ NEW YORK STATE'S OLDEST NEWSPAPER $1.50

Teen's mutilator seeks release

County: Fentress still poses danger

By [illegible]
[illegible]

RIVERHEAD, Suffolk County — A former Poughkeepsie school teacher who mutilated and killed a Dutchess County teenager more than 17 years ago will make another bid for freedom Monday.

Those who oppose Albert Fentress' petition say they are confident he'll remain confined in a mental hospital.

Fentress, while a Poughkeepsie [illegible] school history teacher, confessed to the August 1979 slaying of [illegible] Paul Masters.

He was found not guilty by reason of insanity and has been confined to mental institutions since. But he will be in court this week, seeking his release from Kings Park Psychiatric Hospital in Riverhead.

Lawyers from the Mental Hygiene Legal Services are scheduled to present Fentress' case Monday morning before Supreme Court Judge John Vaughn at the Suffolk County Courthouse. Under state law, Fentress may submit such a petition every two years.

His previous petitions have been denied, although Fentress has been allowed weekend visits to his parents' home in nearby Melville.

Fentress' attorney, Kim Darrow, declined to say who will testify on his client's behalf.

Dutchess County officials say they think they will argue successfully to keep Fentress confined.

"The defense has indicated they have a number of potential witnesses (who will say Fentress has recovered sufficiently to be released)," said Senior Assistant District Attorney Wayne Witherwax, who is opposing the petition for the county. "He has not exhibited any violent episodes, but it's our position that since no one knows what triggered the original (killing) and there is no definitive diagnosis, there's no way to determine if it might happen again."

The hearing is expected to take three or four days.

"We think he still poses a danger to the community," said Mark Carey, a spokesman for Attorney General Dennis Vacco, who is also opposing Fentress' release. "It was a very heinous crime. We're not sure this is the type of guy who should be walking the streets."

Fentress, 56, who works at the King's Park Psychiatric Center's computer center, has been living at the institution for 13 years without incident, officials there say. But the hospital's staff is opposing his bid for freedom, saying they are not convinced he is cured of the illness that caused him to attack the Spackenkill High School graduate in August 1979.

Fentress lured the young man into his home, tied him to a post in his basement, sexually mutilated him and then killed him.

TUESDAY, APRIL 15, 1997 SINCE 1785 ■ NEW YORK STATE'S OLDEST NEWSPAPER 50 CENTS

Attorneys: Fentress not ready for release

Hearing under way in Suffolk County

By Larry Fisher-Hertz
Poughkeepsie Journal

RIVERHEAD, Suffolk County — No one knows what caused Albert Fentress to mutilate and murder a Town of Poughkeepsie teenager more than 17 years ago. And until that mystery is solved and Fentress is pronounced cured, he should remain in a mental hospital.

That was the message from state and Dutchess County law enforcement officials Monday as a hearing on Fentress' petition for release began in Suffolk County Court.

"Mr. Fentress has yet to verbalize remorse for what he did to Paul Masters," Assistant Attorney General John Stolfi said as Fentress' hearing began before Suffolk County Court Judge John Vaughn. "His psychosis may be in remission, but remission does not mean cured."

Fentress has been confined to state mental institutions since 1980, when he was found not guilty by reason of insanity in the Aug. 20, 1979, slaying of Masters. Fentress admitted that he lured the 18-year-old Spackenkill High School graduate into his home on Grand Avenue in the City of Poughkeepsie, then sexually mutilated him and ate some body parts before shooting his victim.

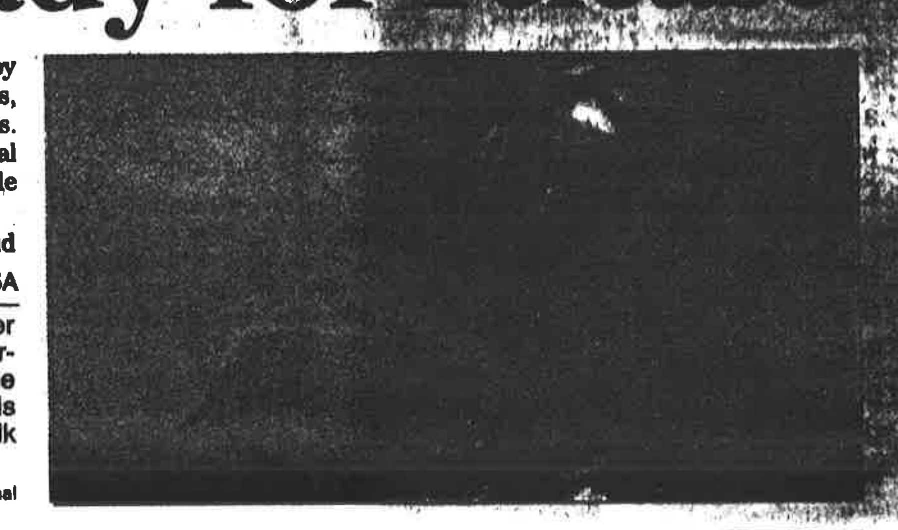
No longer a threat, attorney says

Fentress' attorney contends that the 54-year-old former Poughkeepsie Middle School teacher no longer poses a threat. He argues that he should be released from Kings Park Psychiatric Center.

"This is not a murder trial," said Kim Darrow, a lawyer employed by the Mental Hygiene Legal Services, which represents mental patients. "We are not here to impose moral judgment on an admittedly terrible deed."

"The law says (Fentress) should

Please see Release, 5A



Former Poughkeepsie teacher Albert Fentress listens to attorneys' opening statements at the hearing Monday about his requested release from a Suffolk County mental hospital.

Ken Bizzigotti/Poughkeepsie Journal

[...]KEEPSIE JOURNAL

Release[...] Attorne[...] discuss Fentress

[...]be confined as long as he is dangerous to himself or others and no longer," Darrow said. "He has been a model patient who deserves to be released."

In his opening remarks, Stolfi said the slaying was apparently triggered when Fentress watched the movie "Deliverance" on Aug. 16, 1979. He then went into a trance-like state during which he rewrote some of the script of the movie, depicting some lurid scenes in his own words. He wrote another movie script on Aug. 19, Stolfi said, then confronted Masters the following day.

Fentress sat passively in the courtroom during Monday's proceedings, rarely changing his expression. During a recess, he said he wanted to speak publicly about his case, but had been advised by his attorneys not to.

"That may change, though," he said, indicating he may comment on his case when the hearing concludes later this week.

Psychiatrist testifies

Assistant Dutchess County District Attorney Wayne Witherwax said in his opening remarks that the origin of Fentress' mental illness remained unknown. And he argued that as long as no one could say why Fentress had killed Masters, there was no way to predict whether he would kill someone else if he were released from the mental hospital.

Witherwax's first witness, Mamaroneck psychiatrist Dr. Abraham Halpern, said during his three-hour testimony that he concurred with that assessment.

"(Fentress) continues to manifest obsessive-compulsive and narcissistic behavior, and if he endures certain stresses he may again lose full control and become aggressive, hostile," said Halpern, who examined Fentress last September and analyzed reports from other psychiatrists and psychologists who had observed Fentress.

When Darrow noted that Fentress had not exhibited any aggressive behavior since he was transferred from an Orange County institution to Kings Park in 1984, Halpern replied that Fentress had always been confined and was under professional supervision.

Even during visits to his father's home in nearby Melville, he said, Fentress was in a supervised setting.

"On the very day of the homicide in 1979, (Fentress) played tennis with a teaching colleague, showing

no outward signs of hostility. Yet he then committed this terrible act," Halpern said.

He said he administered a psychological test to Fentress when he met with him last fall and that the results indicated that Fentress was still suffering from the personality disorders that had triggered the mutilation and killing.

Darrow noted that Fentress had been subjected to many stresses during his stay at Kings Park — including the incarceration itself — but that he had been rated as a model patient and was running the facility's computer center.

The hearing is set to resume this morning when Dr. Juliana Kanji, staff psychiatrist at Kings Park, takes the witness stand. She is expected to concur with Halpern that Fentress is not ready to be released.

Fentress is listed as a potential witness when Darrow makes his case for the release later in the week.

allows cameras

By Larry Fisher-Hertz
Poughkeepsie Journal

RIVERHEAD, Suffolk County — For the first time since he was confined to a mental hospital 17 years ago, Albert Fentress is facing cameras in the courtroom.

A ruling allowing still photographers and television [illegible] Fentress' efforts to win his release was issued last week by presiding Suffolk County Court Judge John Vaughn.

Fentress' lawyer, Kim Darrow of Mental Hygiene Legal Services, objected to the ruling Monday morning, but his appeal was denied.

"I find no abuse of discretion (by Judge Vaughn) in allowing the cameras," said Suffolk County Administrative Judge Mary Werner, following a brief hearing in her chambers.

Concern for Fentress' privacy

Darrow said he believed Fentress' right to privacy would be compromised if his photograph appeared in newspapers or was shown on TV.

But Poughkeepsie attorney James Nelson, who petitioned for the cameras to be allowed on behalf of the Poughkeepsie Journal, argued that the case held particular interest for the public and that a judicial panel that had studied the use of cameras in New York's courtrooms had concluded that photographing court proceedings had been a useful educational tool.

"This is not a garden-variety mental health proceeding," Nelson said. "This involves a violent death and the resulting concern of the community."

Fentress described as a threat

Psychologists worry about his levels of stress

By Larry Fisher-Hertz
Poughkeepsie Journal

RIVERHEAD, Suffolk County — Albert Fentress copes well with stress in the mental hospital where he has lived for the past 13 years, but he could kill again if released.

That was the testimony from a psychiatrist as a competency hearing continued Tuesday for the man who killed and cannibalized a Town of Poughkeepsie teenager in August 1979.

"It can happen again, if he is exposed to certain stresses," said Dr. Juliana Kanji, staff psychiatrist at King's Park Psychiatric Center, where the former Poughkeepsie Middle School teacher has lived since 1984. The competency hearing in Suffolk County Court is being held to determine whether Fentress, 55, should be released.

He has been held in state psychiatric centers since 1980, when he was found not guilty by reason of insanity in the slaying of Robert Masters. The insanity defense argues that because of a mental defect, a person either did not know what he was doing when he committed a crime or he did not know it was wrong.


Fentress

Asked by Fentress' attorney, Kim Darrow, whether Fentress had been a model patient who had coped well with the death of his mother and other stressful events, Kanji replied that he had.

But she said that was because he lived in a highly structured environment.

"If (Fentress) has a headache, for example, there's a doctor right there to give him Tylenol," she said. "That wouldn't be the case on the outside. And when he was experiencing difficulties just before the (1979 slaying), he never asked for help."

Fentress has been receiving psychiatric treatment since the Aug. 20, 1979, killing. Under state law, he is entitled to request his release once every two years.

During Tuesday's testimony, Kanji and a Hicksville, Long Island, psychologist, Ruth Mutzner, both

Please see Case, 8A

Case: Stress risks a concern

Continued from 1A

told Judge John V. Vaughn that Fentress had made progress during his stay in state mental institutions. But both agreed he was not ready to be released.

Following Kanji's testimony, Fentress told a reporter he was frustrated by the opinions of the psychiatrists.

"They're up there, testifying about your life," he said of Kanji's comments, "and she was just terribly misinformed."

After Master's death, Fentress told investigators he lured the 18-year-old Spackenkill High School graduate into his home, tied him up in his basement and castrated him before shooting him to death. He later ate the teen's genitals.

Mutzner said she had given Fentress a series of psychological tests when she interviewed him last November.

She said many of those tests indicated that Fentress was suffering from a personality disorder called narcissism, which is characterized by feelings of self-importance and paranoia.

One indication of this behavior, Mutzner said, was Fentress' statement during one test that he was being held in the hospital for political reasons.

He also said that Assistant Dutchess County District Attorney Wayne Witherwax was opposing Fentress' release from the hospital solely to further his career.

"He made recurring references to 'political mischief' (with regard to his case)," Mutzner said.

Questioned by Darrow, Kanji and Mutzner conceded that Fentress had reached a measure of understanding about what he had done.

And they said he appeared to be calm and rational during their interviews with him.

Killer has 'risk factors'

But when Witherwax asked Mutzner if she concurred with the recommendation of the Kings Park staff that Fentress' petition for release be denied, she replied, "I'm afraid I do."

Asked why she had reached that conclusion reluctantly, Mutzner said, "I'm a mental health professional and like to see rehabilitation be successful and minimal restrictions placed on patients. But in this case, Mr. Fentress does have risk factors."

When the hearing resumes this morning, Darrow is expected to call Dr. Azariah Eshkenazi to the stand. Eshkenazi, appointed by the court to examine Fentress, wrote in a report that he believed Fentress may be ready for conditional release from Kings Park — perhaps to a halfway house.

Fentress and Darrow both said they had not decided whether Fentress would testify later in the hearing.

Poughkeepsie Journal
THURSDAY, APRIL 17, 1997
SINCE 1785 ■ NEW YORK STATE'S OLDEST NEWSPAPER
50 CENTS

Judge denies Fentress release

Patient still considered a threat

By Larry Fisher-Hertz
Poughkeepsie Journal

RIVERHEAD, Suffolk County — Albert Fentress, who castrated, cannibalized and killed a teenager in 1979, must remain in a mental institution, a judge ruled Wednesday.

Just seconds after hearing closing arguments in the three-day hearing, Suffolk County Court Judge John V. Vaughn said he was convinced the 54-year-old Fentress wasn't ready for freedom.

"The court finds the state has proven Mr. Fentress should be retained," Vaughn said.

The ruling followed three days of testimony by psychiatrists, psychologists and others who have monitored Fentress' behavior in the past 17½ years.

Fentress, a former Poughkeepsie Middle School teacher, lured 18-year-old Paul Masters into his home on Grand Avenue in the City of Poughkeepsie, sexually mutilated him and killed him. He later ate the teen's genitals.

Fentress was found not guilty by reason of insanity in 1980 and has been confined to mental institutions ever since. He spent the first four years at Mid-Hudson Psychiatric Center, a secure facility in Orange County. His doctors decided in 1984 that he should be transferred to Kings Park Psychiatric Center in Suffolk County, where he has been ever since.


Fentress

Wednesday's ruling means Fentress cannot be granted a conditional release that would have moved him to a halfway house. Assistant Dutchess County District Attorney Wayne Witherwax, who argued during this week's hearing that Fentress wasn't ready for more freedom, said he was grateful for the decision.

"You never have absolute certainty about any court decision before it is rendered," Witherwax said, "but I was pleased by it and I believe it was supported by the evidence."

Asked if he had any special feelings about the case because he was a student in Fentress' eighth-grade history class at Poughkeepsie Middle School 23 years ago, Witherwax said he viewed this case as he would any other.

Witherwax said making sure Fentress was confined "was something that had to be done and I happened to be the one to do it."

Fentress said he was disappointed by the decision but not discouraged.

"I'll get up tomorrow morning and I'll go to work," said Fentress, who works at the Kings Park computer center. "I don't feel sorry for myself. This is where I am and I am

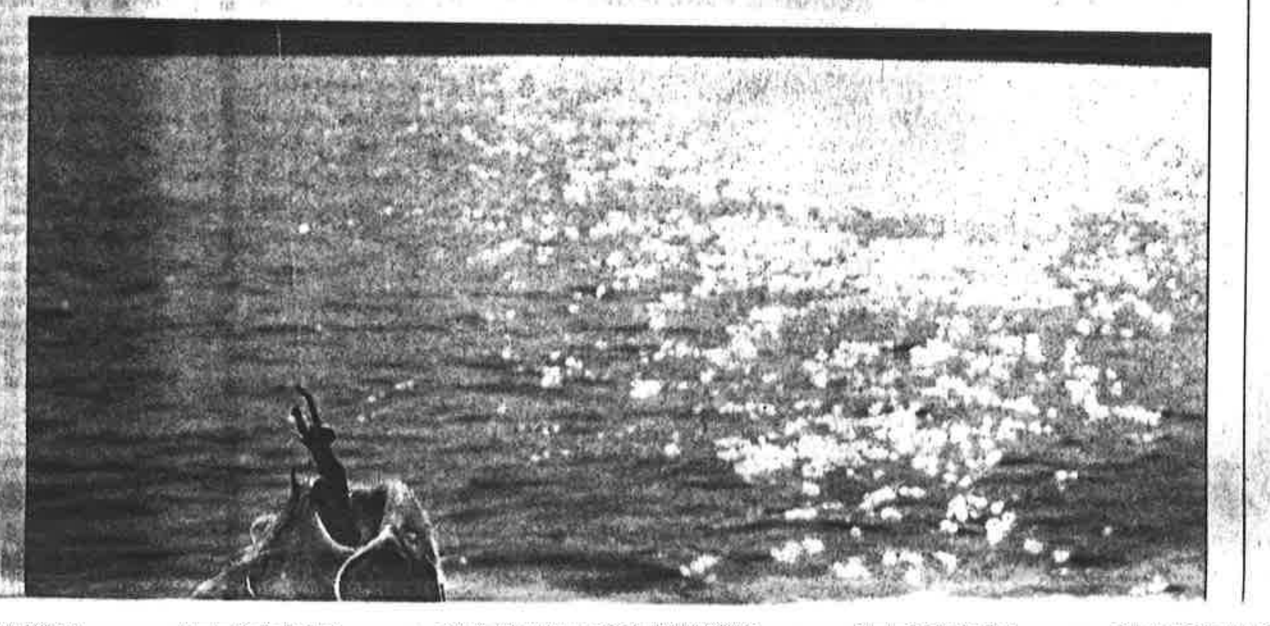
Please see Judge, 7A

THE RIVER'S HEALTH

Panel: PCBs imperil Hudson

By Dennis Kipp
Poughkeepsie Journal

A national environmental group Wednesday called the upper Hudson River the nation's second most endangered river



Tobacco firms poised to deal

Protection from lawsuits sought

The Associated Press

Abandoning their all-out defense of cigarettes, the nation's two biggest tobacco companies now seem willing to cut their legal losses for up to $300 billion and retire Joe Camel and the Marlboro Man if the government backs off its threat to regulate nicotine.

RJR Nabisco and Philip Morris

gation is hurting stock prices and taking management attention away from the business of selling cigarettes.

"I think the tobacco industry is

Judge: Release is denied

Continued from 1A

trying to make use of the time I am here."

Fentress said he is tormented "on a daily basis" by the memory of what he did to Masters on the night of Aug. 20, 1979. He said he was convinced that his 17 years of therapy had ensured that he would never commit such an act again.

"No person who has taken another person's life should ask to be released if he had the slightest doubt in his heart that it wouldn't happen again," he said following the hearing. "I realize the agony I have caused his family and my family."

Fentress invited members of the Masters family to talk to him about the loss if they wished.

"If anyone (from the family) wants to contact me, I wish to be contacted," he said.

Asked by reporters to talk about the slaying itself, Fentress choked back tears, said, "Oh my God," and walked away.

Fentress' attorney, Kim Darrow of Mental Hygiene Legal Services, said he was disappointed with the verdict but realized that most experts who testified had recommended that Fentress not be granted any more freedom.

During Wednesday's proceedings, Forest Hills psychiatrist Azariah Eshkenazi, who was appointed by the court to examine Fentress, said he believed Fentress ought to be moved to a halfway house. Eshkenazi said that while Fentress possessed some characteristics of a personality disorder known as narcissism — a fixation on oneself — the condition did not merit his remaining in the hospital.

The only other witness who testified Wednesday, Kings Park therapy aide Ursula Lisnoff, said Fentress had always been cooperative and well-behaved when she took him on weekly visits to his father's home in nearby Melville.

But Witherwax and Assistant State Attorneys General John Stolfi and Lynda Nicolino argued that Kings Park psychiatric staff members as well as a psychiatrist and a psychologist hired to examine Fentress concurred he still showed signs of personality disorders. Those disorders, they said, indicated he was still potentially capable of violent behavior — especially if he were subject to life outside the structure of the hospital.

"The people do not dispute the fact that Mr. Fentress has been a model patient," Witherwax said in his closing argument Wednesday afternoon. "That structure allows him to function, but the evidence shows he is not ready (to be released)."

"He was leading a normal life when he castrated, cannibalized and murdered Paul Masters," Witherwax said. "Until he makes further progress, his retention is merited."

Fentress can appeal again in '98

of violent behavior — especially if he were subject to life outside the structure of the hospital.

"The people do not dispute the fact that Mr. Fentress has been a model patient," Witherwax said in his closing argument Wednesday afternoon. "That structure allows him to function, but the evidence shows he is not ready (to be released)."

"He was leading a normal life when he castrated, cannibalized and murdered Paul Masters," Witherwax said. "Until he makes further progress, his retention is merited."

Fentress can appeal again in '98

Larry Fisher-Hertz
Poughkeepsie Journal

RIVERHEAD, Suffolk County — A judge's order confining Albert Fentress to a mental institution ensures that Fentress won't be released for a year.

Fentress will be allowed to ask for his release again in 1998, state and county officials said.

Under state law, patients who have been found not guilty in criminal cases by reason of insanity are potentially eligible for release every two years. It is up to the state to show that the patient is not ready to be released.

That's what happened in Fentress' case Wednesday. But because he was originally eligible for conditional release in April 1996, the state and the Dutchess County District Attorney's office must seek another hearing next spring to keep Fentress confined.

Asked whether they would petition the court for such a hearing in 1998, officials said they would — if Fentress' condition remained unchanged.

"The necessity (to retain Fentress in the hospital) was supported by the evidence, and in 1998 that issue can and will be revisited," said Assistant District Attorney Wayne Witherwax, who handled the case against Fentress.

Assistant Attorney General John Stolfi, one of two state officials who opposed Fentress' release at this week's hearing, agreed.

"'If society's interests and Mr. Fentress' own interests are served (by seeking to keep him at Kings Park), we will do so," Stolfi said.

Wayne

WJO, MS, EFW, FFC & WRN

ORANGE COUNTY

SUPREME COURT

Justice Miller

★ MATTER OF ESSEX—This is an application by the Commissioner pursuant to CPL 330.20(11) to transfer Mr. Neal Essex from Mid-Hudson Psychiatric Center to a non-secure facility. The District Attorney has not appeared in this proceeding.

Mr. Essex has a long history of psychiatric hospitalizations commencing in 1978, when Mr. Essex was 18 years old. After his discharge from Kingsboro Psychiatric Center on June 22, 1983 (after being found "not dangerous to himself or others"), Mr. Essex brutally battered his mother to death with a hammer on May 26, 1984. Thereafter followed six admissions to Mid-Hudson pursuant to CPL 730.50, each admission lasting for periods of one to eight months. Each time Mr. Essex was returned to court upon the disposition recommendation of Rogelio Roncal, M.D., who found him competent to stand trial. Each time, within a few months of discharge from Mid-Hudson, Mr. Essex was returned due to his deteriorating condition. After being found not guilty of the murder of his mother by reason of mental illness, Mr. Essex was admitted to Mid-Hudson on June 24, 1991.

On July 17, 1991 Dr. Roncal concluded that Mr. Essex was suffering from a dangerous mental disorder, and his opinion remained unchanged in a December 30, 1991 report. By May 26, 1992, however, the treatment team concluded that Mr. Essex was no longer dangerously mentally ill and Dr. Roncal recommended his transfer to a non-secure facility. The Hospital Forensic Committee disagreed and would not recommend transfer.

On August 25, 1992, the treatment team again concluded Mr. Essex was no longer dangerously mentally ill and Dr. Roncal recommended his transfer to a non-secure facility. Although Dr. Malik concurred with Dr. Roncal, Drs. Lawrence Glass and Manouchehr Lavian of the Hospital Forensic Committee disagreed and transfer was not recommended.

On December 2, 1992, Dr. Roncal and the treatment team again recommended transfer. At that time the Hospital Forensic Committee physicians were Dr. Malik and Dr. Caoili. Apparently neither Dr. Glass nor Dr. Lavian were present, nor does the record indicate whether they were consulted. The Committee recommended transfer.

As a result of the Committee recommendation, the Commissioner brought this proceeding to transfer Mr. Essex to a non-secure facility. On April 21, 1993 a hearing was held. The only evidence before the court is the testimony of Dr. Rogelio Roncal and the hospital record. Dr. Roncal testified that he considered Mr. Essex no longer a danger to himself or others and suitable for transfer to a non-secure facility.

Since 1984, Dr. Roncal found Mr. Essex competent to stand trial on six occasions; each time Mr. Essex's condition deteriorated upon leaving Mid-Hudson. Three times Dr. Roncal's recommendation for transfer was heard by the Hospital Forensic Committee; twice it was denied. A review of the hospital record and, in particular, the progress notes, illustrates a sharp contrast between the progress notes authored by Dr. Roncal and those of other staff members.

Since two psychiatrists (Drs. Glass and Lavian) felt transfer inappropriate as recently as September of 1992, it is imperative to examine the hospital record to determine what has taken place since that time which would support Dr. Roncal's opinion that Mr. Essex is no longer dangerously mentally ill.

The hospital record indicates that throughout September 1992, Mr. Essex expressed a reluctance to take medications for his kidneys, stating to staff at one point that "I don't care if I die."[1] In October Mr. Essex still failed to demonstrate any remorse for his past acts.[2] In November Mr. Essex "seems to understand his mental illness, but at time [sic] will act delusional, thinking that he is chinese"[3]; or "feels that he is mentally ill, but does not seem to really understand what mental [sic] ill is".[4] In December Mr. Essex "continues to feel that he is not mental [sic] ill . . .".[5] From December of 1992 and consistently through February of 1993, Mr. Essex would advise staff that he was, or was not, mentally ill, depending on the person or persons to whom he was speaking. The notes indicate that even when Mr. Essex acknowledged that he was mentally ill, his insight was limited. In March of 1993 staff indicates that Mr. Essex "has no insight into his mental illness, but takes medication."[6] In sharp contrast to the progress notes of staff are the progress notes of Dr. Rogelio Roncal, which uniformly reflect that Mr. Essex accepts that he is mentally ill.

According to the hospital record, Mr. Essex, so long as he is taking his medications, is not a behavioral or management problem. It is apparently this docility which has led the Committee and Mid-Hudson to seek his transfer, since the Committee's previous criteria — that Mr. Essex acknowledge and gain insight into his mental illness — has not been demonstrated.

There is no credible evidence to support a finding by this court that the defendant is not dangerously mentally ill or that his transfer is consistent with public safety and the welfare of the community On the contrary, the hospital record is replete with evidence that this defendant, upon release from Mid-Hudson, has on numerous occasions in the past suffered a regression in his condition; that his comprehension o his mental condition, as observed by the staff on a daily basis, has not improved; and that the hospital has, as recently as February 14, 1992, required a court order to administer Mr. Essex medication over his objection.

The testimony of Dr. Roncal, standing alone, is insufficient to support the necessary findings by this court, particularly since his opinion is in sharp contrast with the observations of staff and the opinions of two other psychiatrists at Mid-Hudson as recently as September of 1992. The weight to be accorded expert testimony is a matter for the trier of fact (Re Estate of Sylvestri, 44 NY2d 260; Topel v. Long Island Jewish Medical Center, 76 AD2d 862, affd 55 NY2d 682). The court is not required to accept the entirety of an expert's testimony, even when it is uncontradicted (Halvorsen v. [Ford Motor Co., 132 AD2d 57, app den 71 NY2d 805) or where the expert's opinion conflicts with the established facts (Re Will of Slade, 106 AD2d 914).

It should be noted that the Insanity Defense Reform Act of 1980 placed upon the District Attorney the burden of proof that the defendant has a dangerous mental disorder or is mentally ill, or that the issuance of a transfer order is inconsistent with the public safety and welfare of the community (CPL 330.20(9]). If the court makes a finding that the defendant does not have a dangerous mental disorder, or finds that the issuance of a transfer order is consistent with public safety and welfare of the community, the court must order the transfer. In making its findings, the court is not limited to the proof, or lack thereof, proffered by the District Attorney. Had the legislature intended that the District Attorney's failure to oppose a defendant's transfer was, ipso facto, sufficient to warrant transfer, there would have been no need for any application to the court, nor would the court be required to make any findings. The mere fact that the District Attorney, for whatever reason, fails to oppose the motion is not dispositive and this court will not affix its signature to an order unless it is satisfied that the defendant is no longer dangerously mentally ill or that the public safety and community welfare will not be endangered.

It is incumbent upon the court, particularly when the District Attorney fails to offer any proof, to scrutinize the record for evidence sufficient to support the findings it is required to make under CPL 330.20(9].

In this case there is no evidence, other than the testimony of Dr. Roncal (which the court does not credit), to support any findings other than that the defendant continues to be dangerously mentally ill and his transfer is inconsistent with public safety and the welfare of the community.

Application for transfer denied. Retention order signed.

(1) Progress Notes September 21, 1992.
(2) Progress Notes of October 17, 1992.
(3) Progress Notes at November 10, 1992.
(4) Progress Notes of November 23, 1992.
(5) Progress Notes December 4, 1992.
(6) Progress Notes March 15, 1993.

Vision in North East

Patricia Harvey has specific goals for the town's community center **3B**

12/8/93

GERRY McNULTY, CITY EDITOR (914) 437-4834

IN BRIEF

Fentress ready for leaves, 3 doctors testify at hearing

RIVERHEAD, L.I. — Three expert witnesses testified Tuesday that Albert Fentress, a former Poughkeepsie Middle School teacher who sexually mutilated and killed a teen-ager 14 years ago, is ready for unsupervised furloughs from a Long Island mental hospital.

Two psychologists and a psychiatrist said their examinations of Fentress led them to believe it would probably be safe to grant him 12-hour furloughs twice a month. The day before, another psychiatrist offered a similar opinion.

In August 1979, Fentress lured 18-year-old Paul Masters into his home, tied him to a post at gunpoint, mutilated him and shot him twice in the head. He ate some of the body parts. Masters, a Spackenkill High School graduate, had not known Fentress.

Fentress was found not guilty by reason of insanity in 1980. He has been hospitalized ever since. His doctors at Kings Park Psychiatric Center want Suffolk County Judge Alfred Tisch to grant Fentress furloughs to his parents' home in nearby Melville. He would be accompanied only by his relatives.

Dutchess County prosecutors are fighting the request, saying Fentress is still dangerous. Senior Assistant District Attorney Wayne Witherwax plans to call to the stand a psychiatrist who believes Fentress is still a threat.

The hearing continues Thursday.

Housing grants awarded

The state has selected affordable housing projects in Dutchess and Ulster counties to receive more than $3 million in federal money, officials said Tuesday.

A proposal to build a 32-unit development in Wappingers Falls was chosen to receive almost $2.6 million, said Louis Ganim, spokesman for the state Division of Housing and Community Renewal.

The new housing would primarily serve senior citizens, with five units reserved for people with developmental disabilities. Subject to final approval by state officials

Hos

But issu to be res by Senat

By Dennis Kipp
Poughkeepsie Journal

With a legislative away, the chairman Health Committee Tuesday to assure mi ficials that more mo in 1994.

"Senator (Michael) he felt confident he w deliver," Ronald Mul of Vassar Brothers Ho

Under the Senate p Valley hospitals coul



37-4834

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 10, 1993

Psychiatrist opposes Fentress furloughs

D.A. witness rebuts experts for defense

By Matt Fitzsimons
Poughkeepsie Journal

RIVERHEAD — A psychiatrist warned a judge Thursday that Albert Fentress, a former Poughkeepsie Middle School teacher who sexually mutilated and killed a teen-ager 14 years ago, should not be given unsupervised furloughs from a Long Island mental hospital.

Dr. Abraham Halpern testified that he believes the proposed furlough would not be in the interest of public safety.

Halpern was hired by Dutchess County prosecutors, who have been fighting the proposed furlough in Suffolk County Court.

Five psychiatrists and psychologists, all hired by Fentress' lawyers and the state attorney general's office, have recommended the furloughs.

In August 1979, Fentress lured 18-year-old Paul Masters into his home, tied him to a post at gunpoint, mutilated him and shot him twice in the head.

He ate some of the body parts.

Masters, a Spackenkill High School graduate, had not known Fentress.

Fentress was found not guilty by reason of insanity in 1980. He has been hospitalized ever since.

His doctors at Kings Park Psychiatric Center want Suffolk County Judge Alfred Tisch to grant Fentress furloughs to his parents' home in nearby Melville. He would be accompanied only by his relatives.

Most of the hearing has been closed to the public, a step taken by the judge to protect Fentress' right to keep details of his psychiatric history private.

For Masters' father, Burt, the closed-courtroom is one more symbol of a system that seems much more concerned with serving Fentress than the public.

"I think this hearing is bogus," Masters said Thursday. "At times, I think I'm not as angry at Fentress as I am at the system."

Judge holds off Fentress ruling

By Matt Fitzsimons 12/11/93
Poughkeepsie Journal

RIVERHEAD — A judge said Friday he will wait until later this month to decide whether to grant unsupervised furloughs to Albert Fentress, a former Poughkeepsie Middle School teacher who sexually mutilated and killed a teen-ager 14 years ago.

After wrapping up testimony in a week-long hearing, Suffolk County Judge Alfred Tisch said he would issue a written decision in the next week or two.

In August 1979, Fentress lured 18-year-old Paul Masters into his home, tied him to a post at gunpoint, mutilated him and shot him twice in the head. He ate some of the body parts. Masters, a recent Spackenkill High School graduate, had not known Fentress.

Fentress, now 53, was found not guilty by reason of insanity in 1980. He has been hospitalized ever since.

The state Office of Mental Health and Fentress' lawyers contend he should be given 12-hour furloughs from Kings Park Psychiatric Center twice a month. He would be accompanied only by his relatives. Fentress' proponents called seven psychiatrists and psychologists to testify that he is probably not a threat.

Dutchess County prosecutors are fighting the proposal and called a psychiatrist of their own to testify that Fentress may still be dangerous.

nim said.

Lawmakers OK 911 plan

Dutchess County legislators this week unanimously approved a plan to create a countywide emergency telephone dispatching system, to be financed by a 35-cent monthly surcharge on telephone lines.

Under a local law approved Monday, the "Enhanced 911," or E-911, system is to be up and running by June 1, 1995. The surcharge, due to take effect next March, will raise funds to renumber addresses throughout the county, negotiate for telephone line access and install equipment necessary to operate the system.

E-911 systems have been used throughout the country to speed up response of police, fire and rescue units.

SPEAK UP

KEEP FENTRESS BEHIND BARS

Tuesday's question

163 responses



Do you believe Albert Fentress should be furloughed from a Long Island mental hospital?

Yes: 10

If he is mentally competent... The man has paid his dues. Let him see his family... If the doctors say he's OK.

No: 153

He will probably do it again... He should be in prison for the rest of his life... You spend more time for a property crime than you do a murder... Lock him up and throw away the key... He's not crazy, he's just plain bad... As a taxpayer, this one time I'm glad to pay to keep someone in prison for life... He didn't give that young boy any chances... Reinstate the death penalty... Concern for public safety should prevail... Why not? Richard Nixon is walking around.

Today's question

Do you think Kinry Road school should be reopened for classes?

"Speak Up" is your chance to express opinions on a variety of topics. Call (914) 437-4923 between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. Please call only once. Speak Up is not intended as a scientific survey.

Singing for Santa

One of Santa's helper
Services class serena
Santa breakfast at Wal

Water

Residents also ap
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Journal staff

Residents Tuesday nigh
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Official returns were not a

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water plant now being const

Ulster

By Lynndee Kemmet
For the Poughkeepsie Journal

Many mid-Hudson Val
have their roots in B

It was back in the
that Abram Steen built his rep
his nursery business, supplyin
trees for the growing orchard
and surrounding counties.

Steen's root stock for plum,
cherry, peach and pear trees w
the best around, according to U
County records kept at the Elti
rial Library in New Paltz.

The nursery business still is
the tiny hamlet of Butterville,
few miles west of New Paltz.

Barbara Palmateer, and her
Vern, run the Ruslyn Nursery i
ville.

"We've been here 20 years,"
Palmateer said.

...re Christmas

...ry clinic on Route 9G in Staatsburg get ...ing the building with a ribbon and putting ... Steve Cornacchini, on ladder, and Scott ...hing touches on the decorations.

Judith A. Wiener/Poughkeepsie Journal

Judge rejects Fentress' bid for furloughs

Escorts a must for 1979 killer

By Matt Fitzsimons
Poughkeepsie Journal

AT A GLANCE

FENTRESS CASE



Albert Fentress, a former teacher at Poughkeepsie Middle School, mutilated and killed Paul Masters in August 1979. He was acquitted by reason of insanity in November 1980 and committed to a maximum-security hospital in Orange County. Five years later, he was transferred to a minimum-security facility in Long Island. His doctors have pushed for greater freedoms, hoping at some point to release him back into the community, but Monday's ruling dealt such hopes a setback.

Fourteen years after he tortured and killed a teen-ager in the basement of his Poughkeepsie home, Albert Fentress is still not ready to leave a Long Island mental hospital without an escort, a judge ruled Monday.

In a one-paragraph decision, Suffolk County Judge Alfred Tisch denied a request by Fentress' doctors to grant him unsupervised furloughs from Kings Park Psychiatric Center.

The decision would seem to set back any chance Fentress has of one day being released, since unescorted furloughs generally are considered a necessary stepping stone to freedom.

"It was the right thing to do," said Burt Masters, the father of Fentress' 18-year-old victim. "Not just in the Fentress case, but in this whole process in which the mental health system is set up to get these people out without much regard for public safety."

In August 1979, Fentress lured Paul Masters into his home, tied him to a post at gunpoint, sexually mutilated him and shot him twice in the head. He then ate some of the body parts.

Masters, a recent Spackenkill High School graduate, did not know Fentress.

Fentress, now 53, was found not guilty by reason of insanity in 1980. He has been hospitalized ever since.

During four days of testimony last week, seven psychiatrists and psychologists testified that they believed Fentress could handle leaving the hospital for 12 hours a day, twice a month, with only his relatives to watch over him.

Dutchess County prosecutors opposed the furloughs, and called to the witness stand a psychiatrist who fears Fentress may still be dangerous.

Senior Assistant District Attorney Wayne Witherwax said that while proponents of the furloughs had more witnesses on their side, "I believe that quality over quantity was the true factor that had to be considered."

One of Fentress' lawyers said he was dismayed by the decision. The attorney, Dennis Feld of Mental Hygiene Legal Services, said Tisch's decision may be appealed.

District Attorney William Grady said his office will fight any future requests by Fentress for furloughs or other privileges.

"By law, these issues will come up periodically," Grady said. "It's not like a trial, where there's a verdict of not guilty or guilty and that's the end of it."

...zures in drug cases limited

Ex-IBMers discuss rebuilding careers

NEW YORK POST, TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 1980

eacher cut up youth and then ate him

FINDING ON NOV 3, 1980

A 39-year-old history teacher acted out a grotesque script he himself wrote by raping, castrating, shooting and cannibalizing a teenager, according to doctors testifying at his murder trial yesterday.

The teacher, Albert Fentress, charged with second-degree murder, was found not guilty by reason of insanity after two days of testimony by psychiatrists in Dutchess Court in upstate Poughkeepsie.

By TOM TOPOR

According to the psychiatrists, on Aug. 18, 1979, Fentress wrote two scripts about sexual mutilation and murder. He then burned the scripts.

Two days later, however, Fentress put his scripts into action: as 18-year-old Paul Masters was walking by his Poughkeepsie home, the teacher invited him in for a drink.

Once in the house, Fentress raped and mutilated the boy, shot him, cut him up, and cooked the parts and ate them.

As one of the defense psychiatrists testified, "Masters accidentally became the character in his [Fentress'] writing. He carried out the rituals of the script. Everything seemed to proceed as though it were in the writing."

A psychiatrist hired by the victim's family agreed with the verdict of "not responsible by reason of mental disease or defect."

Fentress had been a history teacher at the Poughkeepsie Middle School for 10 years. Masters had been scheduled to begin classes at the State University in Albany a week after he was killed.

Fentress had been in Dutchess County Jail since the murder — he had turned himself in — but after yesterday's verdict he was sent to the Mid-Hudson Psychiatric Hospital for an indefinite period. At Mid-Hudson, he will be examined by state psychiatrists.

His period of hospitalization will be determined by psychiatrists and the court.

Killer's furlough rests on opinion

Judge must rely on psychiatrists in Fentress case

By Matt Fitzsimons
Poughkeepsie Journal

Fourteen years ago psychiatrists were convinced Albert Fentress was insane when he tortured and killed a teen-ager in the basement of his Poughkeepsie home.

Today psychiatrists are convinced he's sane enough for eight-hour furloughs from a Long Island mental hospital.

It's a matter of opinion, but when the law relies upon psychiatry, opinions are often all that matter.

"You're used to relying on hard and fast evidence: You have a gun and you have a fingerprint," said Wayne Witherwax, a Dutchess County prosecutor seeking to keep Fentress confined. "You don't have that here. All you have are opinions."

One of the few things that is certain is that Fentress killed 18-year-old Paul Masters in 1979. He was allowed to plead not guilty by reason of insanity after three psychiatrists interviewed him and agreed that he was too deranged to appreciate the difference between right and wrong. Now the doctors at Kings Park Psychiatric Center in Suffolk County believe he would be able to handle excursions to his parents' home in nearby Melville without any supervision from staff.

"We have four senior psychiatrists here who have signed off on the furlough application, and so has one independent psychiatrist who was called in," said Kenneth Marion, spokesman for the hospital.

That's not good enough for Dutchess County prosecutors. Next month they'll ask for all of Fentress' medical records, documents they will search for the indications that the former school teacher is still a threat. They may even have psychiatrists of their own check him out.

Some mistakes are made

In the end, a judge will have to sort through all the opinions and decide whether to approve the furloughs. That's the way all such cases are handled. But with no concrete evidence one way or another, courts are bound to occasionally make mistakes.

In 1990, George Lowy was found not guilty by reason of insanity in the attempted murder of his father. Two years later, a judge who relied on psychiatric opinions decided Lowy, 26, was fit for unescorted walks on the Poughkeepsie hospital.

Lowy took a stroll around the grounds of Hudson River Psychiatric Center last April and kept on walking.

He was gone almost a week before he turned himself in.

Mental health officials note that such errors make headlines while patients who behave themselves go unnoticed. Fentress' doctors point out that he has been allowed unescorted walks on the grounds of Kings Park since 1991. There are no towers or fences to prevent his escape, yet he hasn't made a run for it.

"There is no question," said Marion, "that part of the decision to apply for furloughs is based on the fact that Mr. Fentress has adhered to the rules in the past."

That's a disturbing notion to Nancy Munch, executive director of the Cincinnati-based Parents of Murdered Children.

"Are we just testing him to see if he's safe?" she asked. "And if he's not safe, what poor person pays the price?"



A fatal turn on life's path

Vassar author details slaying of friend, **1B**


Ann Imbrie



Grand slam propels N.Y.

Williams' shot tops Boston, **1C**

Poughkeepsie Journal

TUESDAY, JUNE 15, 1993

SINCE 1785 ■ NEW YORK STATE'S OLDEST NEWSPAPER

50 CENTS

Mental hospital may release '79 killer

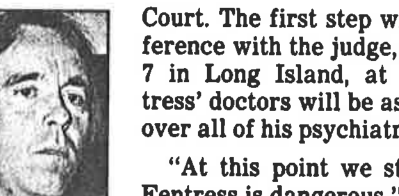
Fentress may get day trips

By Matt Fitzsimons
Poughkeepsie Journal

Albert Fentress, a Poughkeepsie school teacher who sexually mutilated and killed a teen-ager in his basement in 1979, may soon be allowed to make unescorted day trips out of a Long Island mental hospital.

Once deemed an "all but incurable" psychopath, Fentress has been confined to institutions since he was found not guilty by reason of insanity in the slaying of 18-year-old Paul Masters.

But in the past year he has been allowed to make several supervised visits to his parents' home in Melville, a half-hour drive from Kings Park Psychiatric Center in Suffolk County. Now his doctors want to let him out of the facility for eight hours a day, twice a month, with only his relatives to watch over him.


Fentress

Dutchess County prosecutors say they'll fight the move in state Supreme Court. The first step will be a conference with the judge, set for July 7 in Long Island, at which Fentress' doctors will be asked to hand over all of his psychiatric records.

"At this point we still feel Mr. Fentress is dangerous," said Senior Assistant District Attorney Wayne Witherwax, who was among Fentress' history students at Poughkeepsie Middle School. "We do not feel he should be let out into society without, at the very minimum, the supervision of a trained person."

Prosecution's worries

Prosecutors fear two things most. One is that Fentress, who killed Masters while reportedly in the grip of a violent fantasy, might relapse if under stress. The other is that the highly intelligent history scholar has managed to dupe his psychiatrists.

Robert Spoor, a spokesman for the state Office of Mental Health, said both scenarios are unlikely.

"I can't say with 100 percent certainty that, no, that won't happen," said Spoor. "But I think there's a relative degree of certainty that they conduct the evaluation sessions in a manner that might in some way reveal whether

Please see **Fentress,** 2A

On that night in 1979 **2A**

After a regatta, gotta take a nap



Clinton picks D.C. woman

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FROM PAGE ONE

Fentress: Hospital may free '79 killer

Continued

that's the case."

Poughkeepsie lawyer Peter Maroulis, who defended Fentress against the murder charge, says the decision to seek broader privileges is overdue.

"It's been about 14 years where he's been under the constant supervision and scrutiny of the psychiatrists, and it's been five years or more since they were of the opinion that he ready for day furloughs or weekend furloughs. It seems like it's about time."

But the case's former prosecutor, Thomas Dolan, said reports on Fentress completed as recently as a year ago indicated that while he had gained greater control over his problems, the problems were still there.

"Unless something has radically changed, I wouldn't recommend letting him out," said Dolan, now a Dutchess County Court judge.

Robert Prentky, a forensic psychologist at Boston University and expert in sexual homicide, said he doubts that a patient who's been deemed fit for unsupervised excursions could slip back into violent fantasies in the space of eight hours. And even if he started to, the signs would be probably be detected by anyone around him, Prentky said.

Still, there can be no guarantees.

"This is a manifestly imperfect science," Prentky said, noting there is no way to tell "what someone is fantasizing or thinking."

August 1979: Teen snared into fatal trap

By Matt Fitzsimons
Poughkeepsie Journal

When Paul Masters stumbled into the yard of a well-kept home one night in August 1979, he became an unwitting actor for Albert Fentress' deadly script.

Masters and some of his friends, all recent graduates of Spackenkill High School, had been in a fight with rivals from Poughkeepsie High School just after midnight on Aug. 20. When they saw the red lights of police cars cut through the darkness, the young men scattered, ducking behind bushes and darting down side streets.

Masters, 18, chose a service road that ran behind the homes on South Grand Avenue, the street Fentress lived on. He didn't know Fentress, a popular school teacher who sometimes showed up to class at Poughkeepsie Middle School dressed like the people his students read about in history books.

And Masters couldn't have known that just two days before, Fentress sat down in his home and wrote for two hours straight, only to realize after he was done that he had just penned a story about a bizarre sex crime. He was astonished at what he had done, he later told psychiatrists, and burned the papers.

The next day he wrote the same story. Again he burned it.

And then Paul Masters arrived in his yard. Fentress mistook Masters for an intruder at first and leveled a .38-caliber handgun at him. When Masters convinced Fentress he was no threat, the 39-year-old teacher invited the younger man in for a drink.

They had something to eat as well, and then Fentress asked Masters if he'd help him move some plywood in the basement. They only moved one piece.

The youth was tied to a post at gunpoint, sexually abused, mutilated and shot twice in the head. Fentress started to clean up the basement, then called an attorney friend.

The police found him sitting in his living room, the gun resting on his knee.

Sixteen months later, psychiatrists for both the prosecution and defense testified that Fentress killed Masters in the throes of mentally illness, prompting a judge to accept his plea of not guilty by reason of insanity.

Local doctors encouraged by diabetes study

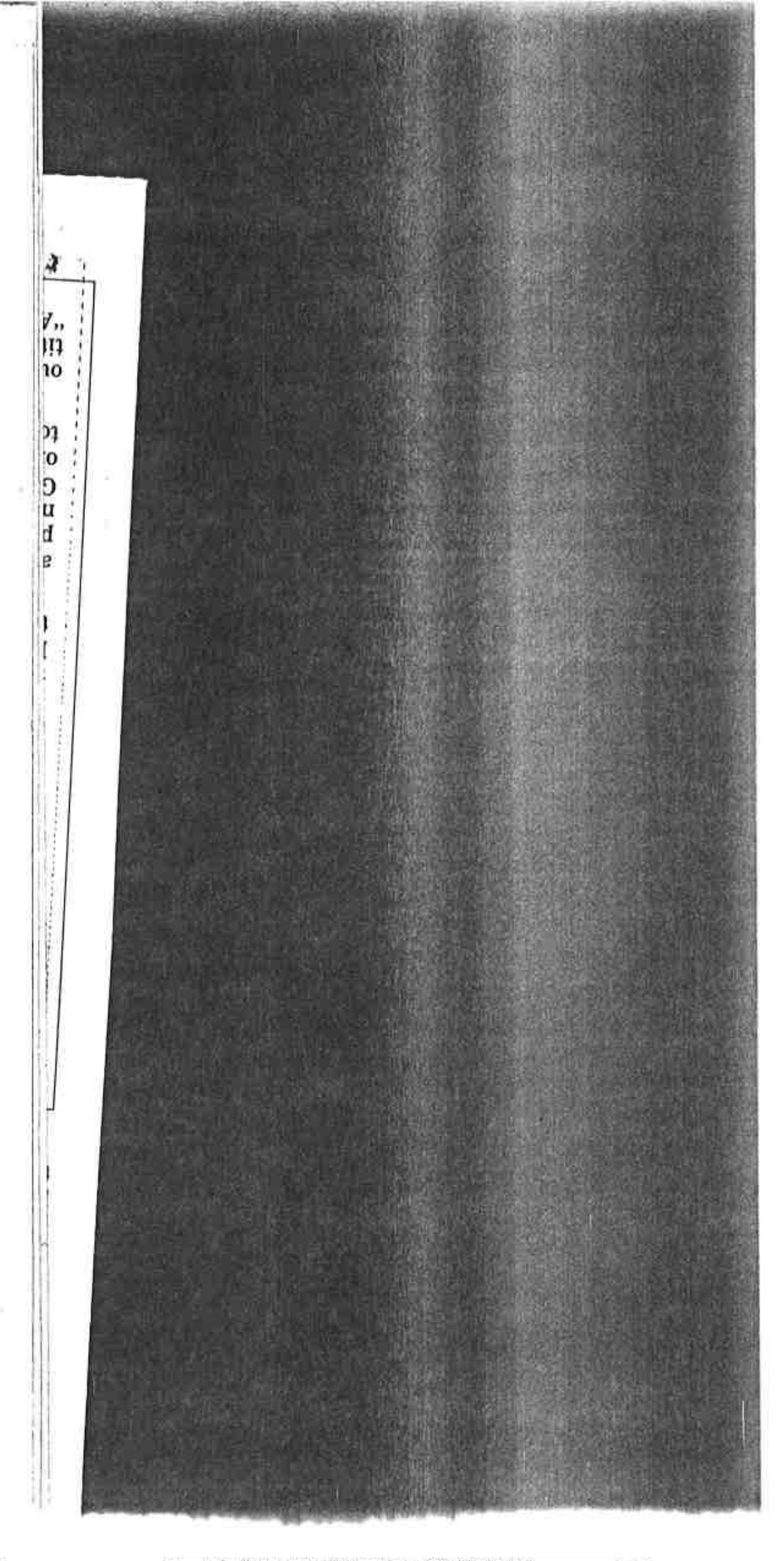
By Carol Trapani
For the Poughkeepsie Journal

Local doctors say the results of ...

whether it is reasonable and practical and what type of quality of life are we assigning the individual. In any type of treat-

needed to transfer digested sugars from blood to cells. As blood-sugar levels soar, cells are damaged permanently. Eyes, kidneys ...

In addition, study participants had about three times the risk of hypoglycemia, which can be dangerous and even result in death ...



Teacher pleads not guilty in murder of young man

AUG 21 1979

By Pamela Golinski
Journal staff writer

Poughkeepsie schoolteacher Albert F. Fentress pleaded not guilty today to charges he murdered an 18-year-old Spackenkill High School graduate Monday.

Fentress was indicted by a Dutchess County grand jury Tuesday on a charge of second-degree murder in the shooting death of Paul Masters.

Fentress was arraigned before County Judge Raymond E. Aldrich Jr., who adjourned the case for 30 days to give defense attorneys time to prepare motions. Defense lawyer Peter L. Maroulis said he was not prepared yet to ask the judge to set bail.

Fentress spoke clearly when asked by the judge who he was and whether he had an attorney, but he made no other statements before he was taken back to the Dutchess County Jail.

Masters was found dead in Fentress' South Grand Avenue home about 3 a.m. Monday. Sources have confirmed he had been shot twice in the head and sexually mutilated.

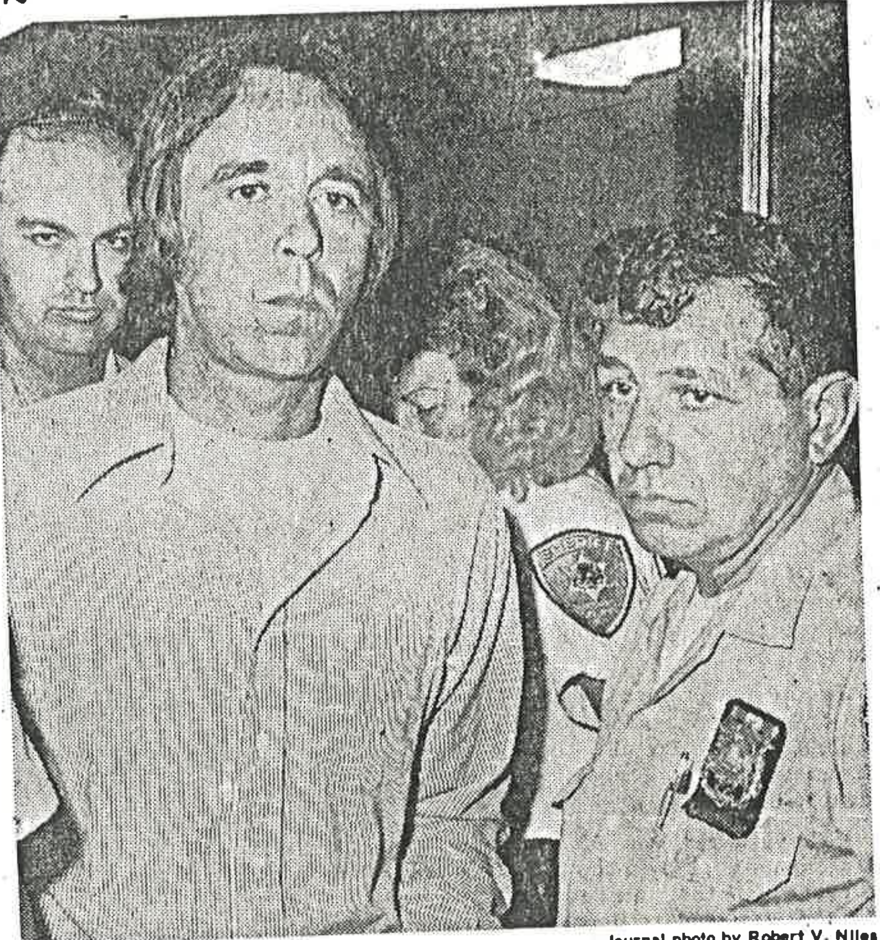
Meanwhile, police have been trying to determine what young Masters was doing in the hours before he was murdered, and how he came to be in Fentress' home.

Police say they still have not been able to make any connection between Masters and the 38-year-old history teacher from the Poughkeepsie Middle School.

And they have also received conflicting reports on where Masters was between midnight Sunday and the time of his death.

Sgt. Roland Witherwax of the Poughkeepsie City Police Department said some young people told police Masters stayed at a party on Scenic Drive until 1 a.m.

Others, however, said he went with a group of friends to the intersection of Hooker and Grand avenues near the Krieger School where a "rumble" was planned between Spackenkill and Poughkeepsie youths, Witherwax said.



Journal photo by Robert V. Niles

Albert Fentress is escorted from courtroom today ...after his arraignment on grand jury indictment

Fentress lives at 216 S. Grand Ave., a few blocks from Krieger School.

Witherwax said police responded to the scene after receiving an anonymous phone call around midnight, but the youths fled when they arrived.

The week before, a similar confrontation was threatened, the sergeant said. Police were dispatched to Spratt Park in the city where youths were planning to "do battle," he said.

In both cases, police arrived before any violence erupted, he said.

Asked about the source of the dispute, Witherwax said, "I have no idea. The kids aren't saying."

According to police, Fentress gave no statement when he was arrested.

He was not charged with first-degree murder because that charge applies only to the murder of a police officer or prison guard, or to a murder committed by an inmate already serving a life sentence.

First-degree murder carries a possible death penalty, while second-degree murder is punishable by a maximum sentence of 25 years to life in prison.

Sources say murder victim shot twice

By Pamela Golinski
and Larry Hertz
Journal staff writers AUG 2 1 1979

Paul Masters, who was found dead early Monday morning in the home of a Poughkeepsie school teacher, had been shot twice in the head and sexually mutiliated, sources close to the investigation confirmed today.

Police found Masters, an 18-year-old graduate of Spackenkill High School, at the South Grand Avenue home of Poughkeepsie Middle School history teacher Albert F. Fentress about 3 a.m. Monday.

Fentress, who has taught history in Poughkeepsie city schools since 1965, pleaded not guilty to second-degree murder at his arraignment in city court Monday and is being held without bail in the Dutchess County Jail pending a preliminary hearing Wednesday.

Sources say it is still unclear whether Masters had been mutilated before or after he died.

Sgt. Roland Witherwax of the Poughkeepsie City Police Department said today there still has not been any connection established between Masters and the 38-year-old teacher, despite interviews with friends and relatives.

Assistant District Attorney Thomas Dolan, who is handling the case, has been quoted as saying there is no indication the two men knew each other before Monday. And Witherwax said police have not been able to determine what brought Masters to Fentress' home.

"We have a lot more work to do at the scene," the sergeant added.

According to some of Masters' friends, he was last seen about 1 a.m. Monday at what they said was a quiet party on Scenic Drive in the Town of Poughkeepsie.

Police say they intend to conduct further interviews with the people who attended the party.

Masters was described by those who knew him as a bright student who dated regularly, played on the high school football team and was a member of student goverment when he was a senior. He graduated in June, and was expected to enter college next month.

Fentress was described as a popular teacher with an outstanding record in the district.

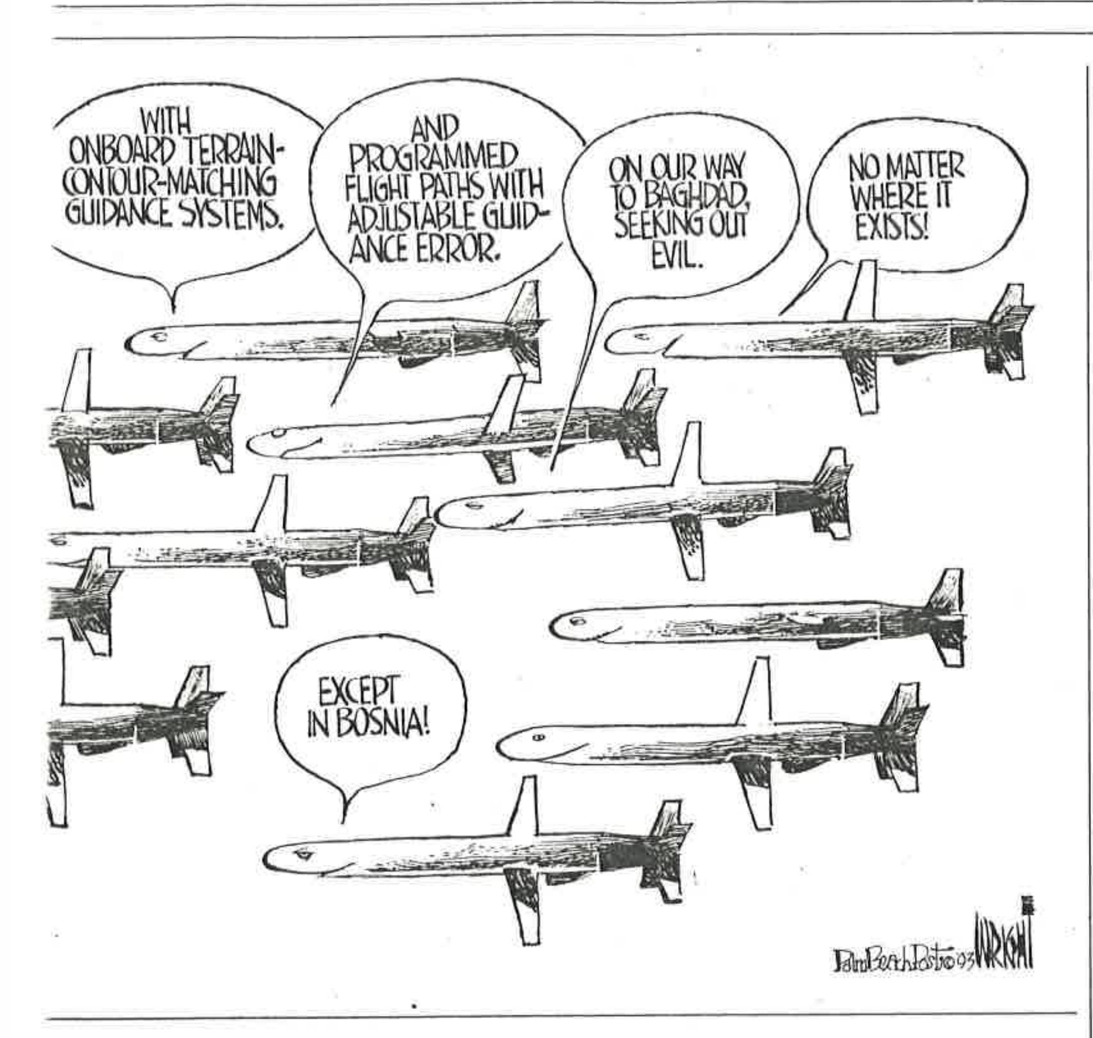
Neighbors said he was a quiet man who lived alone in his two-story home in a peaceful residential neighborhood.

Poughkeepsie Journal
OPINION

YOUR VOICE

Letters: Type or print letter and sign it
Verification: Include daytime phone number
Preferred limit: 250 words
Write: Box 1231, Poughkeepsie, NY 12602
Fax: (914) 437-4921

EDITORIAL STAFF (914) 437-4806



VANTAGE POINT

Keep Fentress confined in institution

By Burt and Barbara Masters

Albert Fentress, who murdered our 18-year old son, Paul Masters, is scheduled for consideration by the State Supreme Court as to the matter of his confinement. It is our understanding that he is requesting the privilege of unescorted furloughs from Kings Park Hospital.

Shortly before seizing our son at gunpoint and subjecting him to live mutilation and murder, Mr. Fentress obtained a handgun permit on the basis of recommendations from three friends who attested that he was a responsible person. He also consulted a psychiatrist friend who told him that his feelings of anger toward adolescent males was normal.

What does this have to do with the present matter? Well, we believe that other well-meaning but dreadfully-mistaken individuals are stepping forward at this time to support his request for furloughs and we feel obligated to simply point out that what happened before can happen again.

Can these individuals deny any possibility of such a recurrence? In our opinion, Mr. Fentress is an extremely dangerous psychopath, unsuited for the relatively unsecure confinement conditions at Kings Park or for furloughs, either supervised or unsupervised.

Mr. Fentress has an extensive record of attempts to manipulate the legal system to his advantage. For more than a

If the insanity plea is allowed to be misused in this manner, it will send a clear message to other potential killers.

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LETTERS

not sell for. I asked the Amenia assessor to reduce the assessment to $80,000 and his response was that it didn't matter what my house was worth. I had to look at my neighbors' houses to see what they were worth.



I applied to the assessment review board and they rejected my request on the grounds that I had not presented sufficient evidence of the full market value of my house, even though I had both the recent sale and a bank appraisal value of $81,000.

What I want to know is, since by definition the sale price of a house on an

efforts to clean up the Hudson River, insulted a female member of Congress on the floor of the House of Representatives, opposed choice at every opportunity and attacked President Clinton's serious efforts to reduce the deficit? Which "people" is it he wants to help?

Ronald Reagan, George Bush, and yes, Jerry Solomon, more than trebled the deficit and debt since 1980. Their message has been that we can halt the decay of our roads, schools, industrial plant, cities and health care system with the self-indulgent, feel-good economics of the 1980s, and that real sacrifice will not be required of anyone. Just oppose taxes and protect the special interests which fuel the taxes, and all will be well. This is noth-

value, how can they possibly argue that my $80,000 house is worth $88,000? Or have they just decided (correctly) that a person who can only afford an $80,000 house will be unable to pursue the matter?

What makes it worse is that, if I understand the state equalization rate correctly, other property in Amenia is being assessed at only 88 percent of its full market value while I am being assessed at 110 percent.

Roberta Moran
Dover Plains

Solomon's the problem

I read with some amusement your report of Congressman Solomon's recent remarks in the Town of Poughkeepsie. That great sage apparently said he'd like to do more for the people, but the Democrats in Congress won't let him. Poor Jerry! Is this the same congressman who has consistently opposed

ing more than irresponsible pandering. Come on, Mr. Congressman, try being part of the solution for a change.

Ross Pattison
Pine Plains

Letter policy

Please type or print your letter and sign it. Include a daytime telephone number. All letters are subject to editing. Letters of more than 250 words are most likely to be shortened. We do not run poems, letters addressed to other people or anonymous letters.

Thank-you letters should relate to a public event, organization or official. Personal thanks to individuals should be handled as a "Card of Thanks" through the classified advertising department.

Letter information is listed in the top right corner of the Opinion page daily. Write Box 1231, Poughkeepsie, NY 12602. Or fax, (914) 437-4921. Questions? Call (914) 437-4806.

year after his arrest, he tried to have the murder charge dismissed and most of the evidence suppressed on the grounds that this evidence (including our son's body and the murder weapon) was obtained through a conversation he had with a friend of his who also happened to be a lawyer. These requests to the Dutchess County Court, the New York State Supreme Court, the Court of Appeals and the U.S. Supreme Court were unsuccessful.

Next, a motion which was similar, but based upon the argument that police actions had violated his Fourth Amendment rights, was submitted to and rejected by the Dutchess County Court. Only after the above failures did he enter his third pleas of "not responsible by reason of mental disease or defect." This plea was accepted by the court on Nov. 3, 1980.

Mr. Fentress' efforts to escape the consequences of his deeds have only increased since his plea of insanity was accepted. Only a few weeks later he and his mental health information services counsel (paid for, of course, by your, our and Paul Masters' New York state tax dollars) were requesting further hearings to contest his confinement in a secure facility. This request was denied on Dec. 29, 1980 and he was committed to the Mid-Hudson Psychiatric Center.

Requests for privileges continue

Since then, there has been a never-ending series of examinations, hearings and requests by Mr. Fentress for transfers, furloughs and other special privileges. In spite of mental illness, Mr. Fentress is intelligent and articulate. Certainly, he has learned through being present at these countless hearings exactly what behavioral patterns he has to exhibit in order to create the impression of being "no longer a danger to society."

Our purpose in writing this letter is to try to prevent another tragedy from occurring. We ask those who would promote Mr. Fentress' eventual release to honestly answer the question of whether or not it would ever be possible for him to again victimize an innocent, unthreatening person such as our Paul.

We also wish to point out that if the insanity plea is allowed to be misused in this manner it will send a clear message to other potential killers — just make sure that the murder is so bizarre, so outrageous, so depraved, that the insanity plea is certain to be accepted, and rely upon New York state's liberal policies with regard to treatment of the criminally insane to ensure that your confinement will be pleasant and that your eventual release into society will be assured.

Burt and Barbara Masters, the parents of Paul Masters who was killed in 1979, now live in California.

ion at a bipartisan funeral

respects to the wife of his one-time bitter rival.

"I can't tell you I knew Mrs. Nixon well, although I had met her and talked to her briefly on several occasions. But I admired her," McGovern said several days after the funeral.

"... I wanted to be part of a public ceremony honoring her."

But as McGovern continued, it was clear there was more to his attendance than just honoring a former first lady.

"I think this country needs some reconciliation efforts," he said. "There's just too much intense partisanship, sniping and back-biting. As somebody who has locked horns with Richard Nixon over the years, I thought showing up at that funeral would show some level of reconciliation."

'George, nice of you to come'

It did, and then some. The Nixon family was overwhelmed in appreciation for the thoughtful gesture of an old opponent. The gratitude expressed to McGovern by Nixon's daughters, Tricia Cox and Julie Eisenhower, touched him deeply.

"That alone made the trip worthwhile," McGovern said.

After the services, a grief-stricken Nixon spoke privately with the guests.

"George, nice of you to come," he said, according to the New York Post.

"Well, she was a great lady," McGovern replied.

"Well, she was a South Dakota girl," Nixon said.

McGovern was puzzled by that one, conceding later he was not aware of Mrs. Nixon's South Dakota connection. A check of her biography found that her father met her mother in South Dakota, and they were married there before

But it took a really big man like George McGovern to show that even in the battle-scarred world of big-time partisan politics, there's still room for decency, kindness and a thoughtful gesture — even toward one-time enemies.

moving to Nevada, where Mrs. Nixon was born.

Besides McGovern, the only other Democrat at the funeral was Vernon Jordan, an old Nixon friend who was President Clinton's official representative at the services. Clinton's non-attendance, and his failure to send his wife, Hillary Rodham Clinton, or Vice President Al Gore, or any other official member of his administration, as protocol dictates, was viewed by some Republicans as a way of snubbing Nixon, or at least trying not to be tainted by associating with him.

But it took a really big man like George McGovern to show that even in the battle-scarred, world of big-time partisan politics, there's still room for decency, kindness and a thoughtful gesture — even toward one-time enemies.

McGovern calls them acts of reconciliation. This world can use more of them.

Richard Benedetto is a columnist for Gannett News Service. Write him at 1000 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, VA 22229-0001.

Looking for solutions
Beacon parents, administrators ta[...]
about ensuring student success,

IN BRIEF

County D.A. set to oppose bid for Fentress furloughs

RIVERHEAD — Dutchess County prosecutors will take a first step today in their fight to keep the killer of a Poughkeepsie teen-ager confined to a mental hospital, asking a Suffolk County judge to reject applications to let Albert Fentress out on day-long furloughs.

If the judge wants to look further into the 14-year-old case, prosecutors will ask to have Fentress examined by a psychologist of their choosing, said Senior Assistant District Attorney Wayne Witherwax.

Witherwax said he will also seek a court order compelling Kings Park Psychiatric Center to open up Fentress' medical records.

Fentress, 53, pleaded not guilty by reason of insanity in the 1979 slaying of Paul Masters. The Poughkeepsie Middle School teacher sexually mutilated and then killed Masters, 18, in the basement of his home.

Fentress' doctors say he is suitable for unescorted furloughs to his parents' home in nearby Melville — a suggestion that has drawn fiery protests from law enforcement personnel, people who live in the community and Masters' family.

Judge orders more tests of Fentress

2 more psychiatrists to examine teen's killer

By Matt Fitzsimons
Poughkeepsie Journal

RIVERHEAD — A former Poughkeepsie teacher who sexually mutilated and killed a teen-ager in 1979 must undergo further evaluation before a judge will consider granting him unsupervised furloughs out of a Long Island mental hospital, the judge ruled Wednesday.

Albert Fentress will be examined by two more psychiatrists — one selected by his lawyers at Mental Health Legal Services and another by the Dutchess County prosecutors who are fighting to keep him confined, Suffolk County Judge Alfred Tisch ruled Wednesday.

Fentress, 53, pleaded not guilty by reason of insanity in the August 1979 slaying of 18-year-old Paul Masters of Poughkeepsie. He admitted he lured the teen into his basement, tied him to a post at gunpoint, mutilated and killed him.

For the past year Fentress has been allowed to make escorted day trips to his parents' home in nearby Melville. Now his doctors have deemed him suitable for eight-hour furloughs, twice a month, with only his relatives to look after him.

Believing Fentress is still dangerous, Dutchess County District Attorney William Grady asked Tisch to order Fentress examined by a psychiatrist of the prosecutor's choosing. Tisch also granted Grady's request for access to Fentress' psychiatric records.

Tisch said he has received 450 letters, mostly from Long Islanders, urging Fentress remain in the Kings Park Psychiatric Center. Some of the letters contained more than 100 signatures.

"We're honestly worried," said Roch Preite, a member of Concerned Citizens for Kings Park. "If we in any way put a damper on Al Fentress' chances for release, hooray for us."

> ‘We're honestly worried. If we in any way put a damper on Al Fentress' chances for release, hooray for us.’
>
> **Roch Preite**
> member, Concerned Citizens for Kings Park

Dennis Feld, who represents Fentress for the Mental Health Legal Services, said his client was evaluated by numerous psychiatrists who believe he is capable of leaving the center without supervision.

Fentress himself was not at the conference. Lawyers on both sides are due back in court on Aug. 16 to update the judge on the psychiatric evaluations. At some point a hearing will be held on the issue.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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1/13/93

Bowdoin Park has many benefits

I believe all parents should thank the county legislators who voted to restore sufficient funds in the 1994 budget to keep Bowdoin Park open all year. Bowdoin is a great educational and recreational resource. To close it even for just two winter months would be a great loss to the community.

Initially, I felt it was important to keep the park open because of the educational programs used by our schools and scout groups. The archaeological dig for Indian artifacts, the rock shelter, the nature center, the maple syrup program and other activities have brought to life stories children read in history books about the Indians and the Hudson River.

But what about the park's recreational value? Our children do not have the same kind of carefree childhood about which most of us love to reminisce. In the news, we hear story after story about the violence children see on television, in video games, in school, and even in their own homes. If we can give them a few days of simple pleasures such as sledding or feeding the animals at the red barn farm, what would it be worth in dollars and cents? It is certainly more than the $50,000 that was restored to the budget, which equates to only 21 cents per county resident for the year.

None of us ordinary citizens can donate a half billion dollars to our youth as Walter Annenberg recently did. But for only 21 cents per person look what we can give our kids: a safe place where they can make some childhood memories to cherish when they are our age.

Carol Larkin
Poughkeepsie

LETTERS

Thanks for all the support

We would like to thank Dutchess County and the district attorney's office for contesting the request for unescorted furlough privileges by Albert Fentress, the murderer of our 18-year-old son, Paul Masters. It was very important to us to know that you remembered and cared.

We want to thank all of you who wrote letters, circulated or signed petitions, made telephone calls and stepped out in any way to express your disapproval of the furlough request.

We want to thank especially, all you dear, loyal friends who came out to support us and renew old friendships. It was very moving indeed. Poughkeepsie is still a great place with great people.

While it is not surprising that Mr. Fentress continues to pursue every possible avenue toward freedom, it is difficult to understand how Mental Hygiene Legal Services can justify spending such enormous amounts of taxpayer money, effort and legal resources ever since 1980 to further his ambitions. Fortunately, the New York Supreme Court decided not to grant his unescorted furlough request at this time because of fears for safety of the community. Regardless of whether or not this decision was influenced by your outcry, we thank you for standing up and making your views known.

Barbara and Burt Masters
San Jose, Calif.

SPCA praised

There is an old saying, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." Due to the recent events surrounding the Hyde Park SPCA, I feel compelled to reference this adage. I dealt with the Hyde Park SPCA most recently this past August when I adopted my dog, as well as in the past, along with periodically making pet food donations to the facility.

The people I met and dealt with were a very special, very caring and outstandingly devoted staff. Althoug[h] were far less affluent than othe[r] facilities, they kept a healthy, cl[ean] uplifting environment for their [...] — young, old, big, small, frie[ndly] problem prone. I always cam[e] from a visit there applauding [...] ing accolades to the overall ef[fort of] the staff.

I am not privileged to know [the ac]tual "politics" of what has tran[spired] and therefore only offer my v[...] jective opinion, but I know t[he] staff dismissed would be very [...] missed, a total loss to the SPC[A] itself, and most of all next to im[possible] to replace the compassion, d[...] and devotion they brought [...] work. The county consumer p[...] will suffer profoundly, but mo[...] innocent animal victims who [...] political pull to plan for their [...] a future they no longer will hav[e].

Diane

Animals need homes

Should the SPCA develop a publication in our area n[...] which would describe anima[ls sched]uled for death with pictorial, [...] euthanasia date and brief desc[ription of] animals, I believe the follo[wing im]provements would develop.

We the people, could o[...] small volunteer group that co[...] tize our efforts to find homes [...] animals before their death da[te].

I have always kept som[e...] from the SPCA because of c[...] knowledge as to when and [...] mals they choose to destr[oy...] they consider this new appr[...] one would feel a lot more su[...] their organization.

Bob

O'Neill was 'rare find' in politic[s]

Tip served public and himself well

WASHINGTON — Unlike many journalists who have written lately about former House Speaker Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill on the occasion of his death, I don't have personal remembrances, only impressions. I never met the gentleman from Massachusetts; never talked to him; and only saw him in per-

DEBORAH MATHIS



COMMENTARY

larity that straddling is the great Washington pastime

ington, nor that O'Neill was [...] man. But his stern loyalty, [not only] to his party but, more imp[ortantly, to] himself, is fast becoming a[n anachro]nism.

The name of the game t[oday is] to campaign as an original [but govern] as a rider of bandwagons. [...] tenets, so dramatically pr[...] the beginning, turn to mush [...] worn down by popular dem[and or, bet]ter said, by the demand to b[e...]

Too, the business of poli[...]

12/21/93



AP Photo

Fentress

Killer Needs Escort

By Elizabeth Wasserman
STAFF WRITER

Despite the recommendations of seven psychiatrists and psychologists that Albert Fentress Jr. be allowed unescorted visits with his family in Melville, a state judge has denied the privilege to the former history teacher acquitted by reason of insanity 14 years ago for the murder of a Poughkeepsie teen.

After a four-day hearing earlier this month, state Supreme Court Justice Alfred C. Tisch found that attorneys for Kings Park Psychiatric Center and the state Mental Health commissioner, who backed the visits, failed to prove that the clinical condition of Fentress, 53, warrants such furloughs and that the furloughs would be "consistent with the public safety and welfare of the community." Fentress is being held at King's Park.

The two-page ruling, written last week, was praised by the family of Fentress' victim, Paul Masters, 18, who was tied to a basement post in Fentress' home, sexually abused and mutilated, and shot twice in the head. Fentress then engaged in cannibalism.

"The judge was wise in making the decision for the safety of society," said Barbara Masters, the teen's mother, who is now living in San Jose, Calif. But Masters said she and her husband, Burt, believe that the case is far from over. "We feel the system needs to be improved . . . I'm absolutely sure he will be released one day."

Fentress' attorney, Leslie DeLia, of the Mental Hygiene Legal Services, said they may appeal Tisch's ruling to the Appellate Division in Brooklyn.

During the hearing, DeLia and an assistant state attorney general called eight witnesses, seven of them mental health experts, who recommended that Fentress be allowed two unsupervised 12-hour furloughs per month with his family. The Dutchess County district attorney's office, which originally prosecuted the case, presented one psychiatrist to testify

Please see DENY on Page 94

Killer Needs Escort

DENY from Page 7

that Fentress should not be permitted the furloughs.

"I feel that we did meet the burden of proof and what the court missed was that this was a hearing about psychiatric treatment. The state was requesting two 12-hour furloughs per month with very specific monitoring devices," DeLia said yesterday. "The court missed that point and treated it as if it were an issue of outright release."

Since last year, Fentress has bee… ents accompanied by a hospital staff m… the application were granted, his parents … close relatives would have been able to sign him … for extended visits without any escorts.

More than a year ago, the Kings Park Psychiatric Hospital forensic committee recommended that Fentress be granted a year of escorted furloughs and then a year of unescorted furloughs. After the state Office of Mental Health filed an application for the furloughs, the court agreed only to the escorted visits, twice a month for eight hours at a time. Bob Spoor, communications director for the state Mental Health office, said yesterday that they were not planning to appeal.

COUNTY OF SUFFOLK



OFFICE OF DISTRICT ATTORNEY

JAMES M. CATTERSON, JR.
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

DEC 29 1993

December 22, 1993

A.D.A. Wayne R. Witherwax, Esq.
Deputy Bureau Chief
Office of the District Attorney
County of Dutchess
10 Market Street
Poughkeepsie, New York 12601

Re: People v. Albert Fentress

Dear Wayne:

Thank you so much for your kind letter to Mr. Catterson concerning the hearing on the above-referenced case. It was a pleasure having you here and I am happy that I could be of some help to you.

I thought you would like to see the enclosed article which appeared in Newsday on December 21st.

Congratulations on a well-earned victory.

I hope to have the pleasure of working with you again in the near future.

Regards,

Sue

SUSAN I. BRAITMAN
Assistant District Attorney
Forensic Unit

SIB:gs

Enclosure

CRIMINAL COURTS BUILDING ▪ 200 CENTER DRIVE ▪ RIVERHEAD, N.Y. 11901-3388 ▪ (516) 852-2500

Fentress wants out of facility

Officials: Keep cannibal confined

By Larry Fisher-Hertz
Poughkeepsie Journal

Nineteen years after he cannibalized and killed a teenager in the City of Poughkeepsie, Albert Fentress is making another bid for freedom from a Long Island mental institution.

The 56-year-old Fentress, who was a Poughkeepsie Middle School history teacher in 1979 when he killed Paul Masters, has been confined since he was found not guilty of the crime by reason of insanity. Fentress' three previous requests for release to a halfway house from Kings Park Psychiatric Center in Riverhead, Suffolk County, have been denied.

Fentress told investigators he lured the 18-year-old Spackenkill High School graduate into his home in August 1979, tied him up in his basement and castrated him before shooting him to death. He later ate part of the body.

Fentress

Under state law, Fentress is permitted to ask a court every two years to consider his release. Suffolk County Court Judge John G. Vaughn is set to hear the case starting Sept. 14.

Office, doctors agree

Vaughn is the same judge who denied Fentress' last petition for release, and Dutchess County Assistant District Attorney Wayne Witherwax said he believed he could again convince him to keep Fentress confined at Kings Park.

"The psychiatrists at the hospital are of the opinion he should be retained at the institution, and obviously our office agrees," Witherwax said.

Witherwax said two court-appointed psychiatrists examined Fentress in February and March of this year and both recommended that he remain at Kings Park.

Fentress has lived at the facility for the past 14 years and works at the computer center there. He is permitted to leave the grounds,

Please see **Fentress**, 12A

Fentress: Release meeting nears

Continued from 1A

under escort, once a month to visit family members.

Because the Dutchess County district attorney's office first handled the case, it remains the prosecutor of record at any court proceedings. But Witherwax is being joined by the state attorney general's office in opposing Fentress' release.

Fentress is being represented by the Suffolk County Mental Hygiene Legal Services office. Attorney Kim Darrow, who is handling Fentress' case, declined to comment Friday.

The victim's father, Burt Masters, said he did not plan to attend the upcoming hearing. But he said he and other family members had not ruled out talking to Fentress sometime in the future.

Offer to speak with family

Following his last retention hearing last spring, Fentress publicly announced that if members of the Masters family wished to speak to him about what he had done, he would welcome such a conversation.

Burt Masters, who now lives in suburban San Jose, Calif., said he had discussed Fentress' offer with his four surviving children, but the family could not come a a consensus on the issue.

"We couldn't agree that this was a good time to reconcile with (Fentress)," Masters said in a telephone conversation last week.

"I wouldn't rule it out in the future," he said, "but (Fentress) has a credibility problem, and it would have to be a mutual decision among all of us."

> 'The psychiatrists at the hospital are of the opinion he should be retained at the institution.'
>
> **Wayne Witherwax**
> Dutchess County
> assistant district attorney

DUTCHESS COUNTY
DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

Inter-Office Memorandum

TO: ________________ DATE: ________________

FROM: ______________

RE: ________________

6/23/98

Leave Fentress where he is

No, Albert Fentress should not be freed from a Long Island mental institution. Even his doctors don't think he should be released from the Kings Park Psychiatric Center in Suffolk County. The judge overseeing his case should heed that.

This man, a former schoolteacher, committed one of the most vicious crimes ever in Dutchess County. In 1979, he tortured, killed and cannibalized 18-year-old Paul Masters, a Spackenkill High School graduate, after trapping him in the basement of Fentress' City of Poughkeepsie home.

At his trial in 1980, both the defense and prosecution agreed that Fentress was mentally ill when he committed these horrendous acts. The judge had no choice but to find him not guilty by reason of insanity. Fentress has been hospitalized in institutions since then.

Now 56, Fentress, who taught history at the Poughkeepsie Middle School, wants out. He already is permitted to leave the grounds once a month, with an escort, to visit family members. That's enough. Even that may be more risk than society should face.

Fentress' underlying psychological problems have never been resolved, according to doctors who have evaluated him, says Dutchess County Assistant District Attorney Wayne Witherwax. That means there's no guarantee that he couldn't react violently once again.

Fentress has had his request for release to a halfway house rejected three times before. It shouldn't be permitted this time either.

Assistant D.A. Witherwax opposes it. The state attorney general's office opposes it. The two court-appointed psychiatrists oppose it.

Now Suffolk County Court Judge John G. Vaughn, when he hears the case on Sept. 14, should agree with them, just as he did last time around.

Leave Fentress where he is.

work sale
...f possible buyers
Business, 5B

Poughkeepsie Journal
MID-HUDSON

Obituaries 2
Our Towns 3
Business 5

(914) 437-4833

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1...

Doctor: Fentress may kill agai...

Psychiatrist urges ex-teacher remain in state hospital

By Larry Fisher-Hertz
Poughkeepsie Journal

RIVERHEAD, Suffolk County — Albert Fentress is a "sexual sadist" who may kill and mutilate someone again if he is released from a mental hospital.

That was the testimony Monday from a court-appointed psychiatrist who examined the former Poughkeepsie teacher who admitted killing and cannibalizing a teenager in 1979.

"Someone who has done what he's done and who has this combination of personality traits should not be released into the community," Dr. Michael Schwartz told Suffolk County Court Judge John Vaughn as the hearing on Fentress' case got under way.

Fentress

Two other psychiatrists — one who agrees Fentress should be kept inside the hospital and another who believes he should be moved to a halfway house — are slated to testify today.

Fentress, 58, is asking Judge Vaughn to order his release from Kings Park Psychiatric Center, where he has been living for the past 15 years.

Comments evoke little emotion

Wearing a blue blazer and gray slacks, his gray hair neatly combed, Fentress showed little emotion as Schwartz outlined his diagnosis and called Fentress a "danger to himself and others."

But he chatted amiably with his lawyer and others in the courtroom during breaks in testimony.

Fentress was hospitalized after telling authorities he sexually mutilated then murdered 18-year-old Paul Masters after luring the Spackenkill High School graduate into his home on Aug. 20, 1979. He was found not guilty by reason of insanity and has been living in mental institutions ever since.

During his three hours of testimony Monday, Schwartz said he saw no evidence that Fentress' condition had improved significantly during his 19 years since the murder.

"Mr. Fentress has an apparent lack of insight into the psychologi-

Please see Fentress, 2B

WHAT'S NEXT
FENTRESS HEARING

Albert Fentress' release he... ing continues this morning i... Suffolk County. Dr. Juliana Kanji, a staff psychiatrist at Kings Park, is expected to ... called by Dutchess County authorities, who are arguing against Fentress' release. Psychologist Lawrence Pan... is expected to testify on Fen... tress' behalf...

VASSAR LECTURE SERIES

Author culls ideas from family history

Students marvel at ...

to those who cannot speak for themselves, otherwise known as

Plan to question officers called of...

ury 9, 1931, in Arena, N.Y., daughter of Charles and King Ebert. arried Bruce VanSteen- May 15, 1947, in Windham. es at home. survivors include a son, B. VanSteenburg of Red

p.m. Thursday at the Burnett-Rockefeller & Hand Funeral Home, 30 S. Broadway, Red Hook.

Services are at 10 a.m. Friday at the United Methodist Church, Church Street, with the Rev. Paul R. Gingrich officiating. Burial will follow in St. Paul's Lutheran Cemetery, Red Hook.

nela Lauro, homemaker

LAND — Carmela Lauro, ghland resident, died Sun- he Ferncliff Nursing Home beck.

nemaker, Mrs. Lauro was a of the Plattekill Senior Cit-

Jan. 17, 1913, in Brooklyn, a daughter of Michael and ina SantaMartino Nappi.

married Michael Lauro, d in May 1981.

ivors include three sons, re Lauro of Windermere, ichael Lauro Jr. of Middle- N.J., and Anthony Lauro of id; two daughters, Rose Barone of Highland and Ann Marie Seery of Staten Island; four brothers, Anthony Nappi of Staten Island, Albert Nappi and John Nappi of Brooklyn and Henry Nappi of Long Island; two sisters, Anna Falcone and Mary Fernino of Brooklyn; 10 grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

Calling hours are 2 to 4 and 7 to 9 p.m. today at Sutton Funeral Home Inc., Crescent Avenue, Clintondale.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at 10 a.m. Wednesday at St. James Roman Catholic Church, Milton. Burial will follow in St. Charles Cemetery, Farmingdale, Nassau County.

or K. Brimmer, retired librarian

ATSBURG — Lenor K. er, 82, a local resident since ied Sunday at her home.

Brimmer was a librarian years at Haviland Junior School in the Hyde Park dis- efore retiring in 1987.

was a past president of the of trustees of Staatsburg y.

served as a lieutenant in the avy during World War II.

n Nov. 10, 1915, in New York he was a daughter of Samuel and Esther Bennett Kaufman.

She married Kenneth E. Brimmer, who died in 1985.

Survivors include two daughters, Barbara Steinberg of Highlands, N.J., and Beth Vega of Pueblo, Colo.; three grandchildren; and several nieces and nephews.

There are no calling hours.

Services are private at the convenience of the family.

Arrangements are by Sweet's Funeral Home Inc., Route 9, Hyde Park.

ina Newmaster

lling hours for Catina Lynn naster, 25, who was found in Poughkeepsie on Sept. 2, to 4 and 7 to 9 p.m. today at Michael Torsone Memorial ral Home Inc., 218 Mill St., hkeepsie.

rvices are at 9:15 a.m. iesday at the funeral home, ved by a Mass of Christian l at 10 at St. Peter's Church, Park. Burial will follow in St. 's Cemetery, Poughkeepsie.

Edward J. Sette

VERBANK — Edward Joseph Sette, 87, a 29-year resident, died Saturday at his home.

Calling hours are 2 to 4 p.m. Wednesday at Hufcut Funeral Home, Main Street, Dover Plains. Services are at 10 a.m. Thursday at St. Charles Borromeo Church, Mill Street, Dover Plains, with the Rev. Edward Barry officiating.

Burial will be private at the convenience of the family.

The calling hours and services were given incorrectly to the Journal for Mr. Sette's obituary.

BRIEF

akfast to launch ted Way cash drive

nited Way of Dutchess County aunch its 1998 Campaign with and Hope Thursday with a

the neighboring stree

Fentress: Psychiatrist testifies killer should remain in hospital

Continued from 1B

cal mechanisms that led to the murder," he said.

That claim was disputed by Fentress' attorney, Kim Darrow, of Mental Health Legal Services. In cross-examining Schwartz, Darrow asked whether Fentress had ever had a sadistic sexual fantasy, as Schwartz claimed that those diagnosed with Fentress' condition normally do.

Schwartz said Fentress had not admitted to having such fantasies, but said his actions had virtually proven that he did.

"Mr. Fentress wrote a script outlining his fantasy and then he acted on it," Schwartz said.

Fentress told police he had written a short story two days before Masters was killed. In the story, he described some of the events that later took place on the night of the killing.

The former Poughkeepsie Middle School history teacher invited Masters inside his Grand Avenue home, offered him a drink, then asked him to move some plywood in the basement.

Fentress then tied Masters up, mutilated him, shot him and ate part of the body.

"It's typical of sexual sadists to script their behavior, Schwartz said.

Schwartz conceded, however, that Fentress had not exhibited any violent or sexually inappropriate behavior since being hospitalized.

And Darrow noted that Fentress had gone on several escorted visits to his family's home and taken hundreds of supervised trips to shopping centers, movie theaters and parks in the past several years.

"Do you know of any instance when Mr. Fentress acted inappropriately on any of these visits?" Darrow asked.

"No," Schwartz replied. But he insisted that the risk of releasing Fentress was significant.

"People with these traits don't ask for help until they get in trouble, such as when they commit a crime," he said.

Fentress will try again for freedom

By Larry Fisher-Hertz
Poughkeepsie Journal

Albert Fentress will make another bid for freedom from a Long Island mental institution Monday, 19 years after he killed and cannibalized a Town of Poughkeepsie teenager.

Fentress, 57, was employed as a Poughkeepsie Middle School history teacher in August 1979 when he killed 18-year-old Paul Masters in the basement of his Grand Avenue home.

Authorities said Fentress mutilated and ate part of Masters' body.

He was found not guilty by reason of insanity in 1980 and has been confined in institutions ever since.

Fentress

Under state law, Fentress is permitted to ask a court to consider his release every two years. A hearing on his retention at Kings Park Psychiatric Center is slated to begin Monday morning in Riverhead before Suffolk County Court Judge John Vaughn.

Fentress, represented by an attorney from Mental Health Legal Services, is expected to argue that he has recovered from the illness — never specifically diagnosed — that caused him to kill Masters.

At previous hearings, the most recent in April 1997, Fentress' attorneys noted that he has never had another violent episode and has not taken medication for more than decade.

Strong opposition to release

But prosecutors from the state attorney general's office and the Dutchess County District Attorney's office oppose Fentress' petition.

"Doctors from the very institution where he is being held are of the opinion that he should be retained, and obviously we agree," said Senior Assistant District Attorney Wayne Witherwax, who will argue the case before Judge Vaughn.

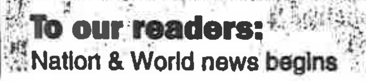
Witherwax said his witnesses would include Dr. Michael Schwartz, a clinical psychiatrist on the faculty at the State University College at Stony Point, and Dr. Juliana Kanji, a staff psychiatrist at Kings Park.

Schwartz examined Fentress last February at the court's request. Kanji interviewed him last week.

Fentress is expected to call Lawrence Panza, one of several psychologists currently treating

Please see Fentress, 5A

To our readers:
Nation & World news begins



CRISIS IN TH

Clinton fi

Report divides valley's views

By Jim Haviland
Poughkeepsie Journal

Mid-Hudson residents interviewed Saturday condemned alleged wrongdoings Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr laid before Congress and the nation concerning President Clinton. But many said the allegations fall far short of impeachable offenses.

"I'm surprised by what Starr reported," said Kathy Falcetta, a Highland resident. "I think Clinton's in big trouble, but I don't feel he should be impeached."

Feeling the same way is Roseanne Morse, a Town of Wappinger resident.

"The president shouldn't be impeached for the stupid things he did," she said. "Clinton apparently did the deed and should be punished. But there shouldn't be an impeachment."

The independent counsel's report was released to the public by Congress on Friday. In often searing detail, it lays out a sexual affair between Clinton and former White House intern Monica Lewinsky and specifically lists 11 acts by Clinton that "may constitute grounds for an impeachment."

Lionel Turpin, a City of Poughkeepsie resident, said the president should resign because of his inappropriate relationship with Lewinsky.

"I can't condone what Clinton did to his family, especially his wife," added Turpin. "It was wrong. To lie about it was no good."

Warren Sigrist of Rhinebeck praised the Starr report.

"Clinton and the truth seem deadly enemies," he said. "The president lied about Monica Lewinsky and, in my opinion, has lied all through his presidency. I don't believe he can be trusted."

"Oral sex might not be an impeachable offense," Sigrist said, "but Clinton certainly has brought disgrace on the office of the president."

Some firm on impeachment

So much disgrace that Jimmy Karaiseky of Poughkeepsie said Clinton should be impeached and forced out of office.

"If the president had come clean in the beginning, I'd say let him go," Karaiseky said. "But he kept lying and has done a lot of harm to the country."

But others said the revelations of sexual acts, while shocking, are a private concern for President Clinton and his family.

"As long as he's doing right for the country, they should leave him alone," said Mark McCray of the City of Poughkeepsie.

"I think they're wasting everyone's time with all this stuff about Bill Clinton," said Joseph Bigby, a City of Poughkeepsie resident. "The president made a mistake and admitted it."

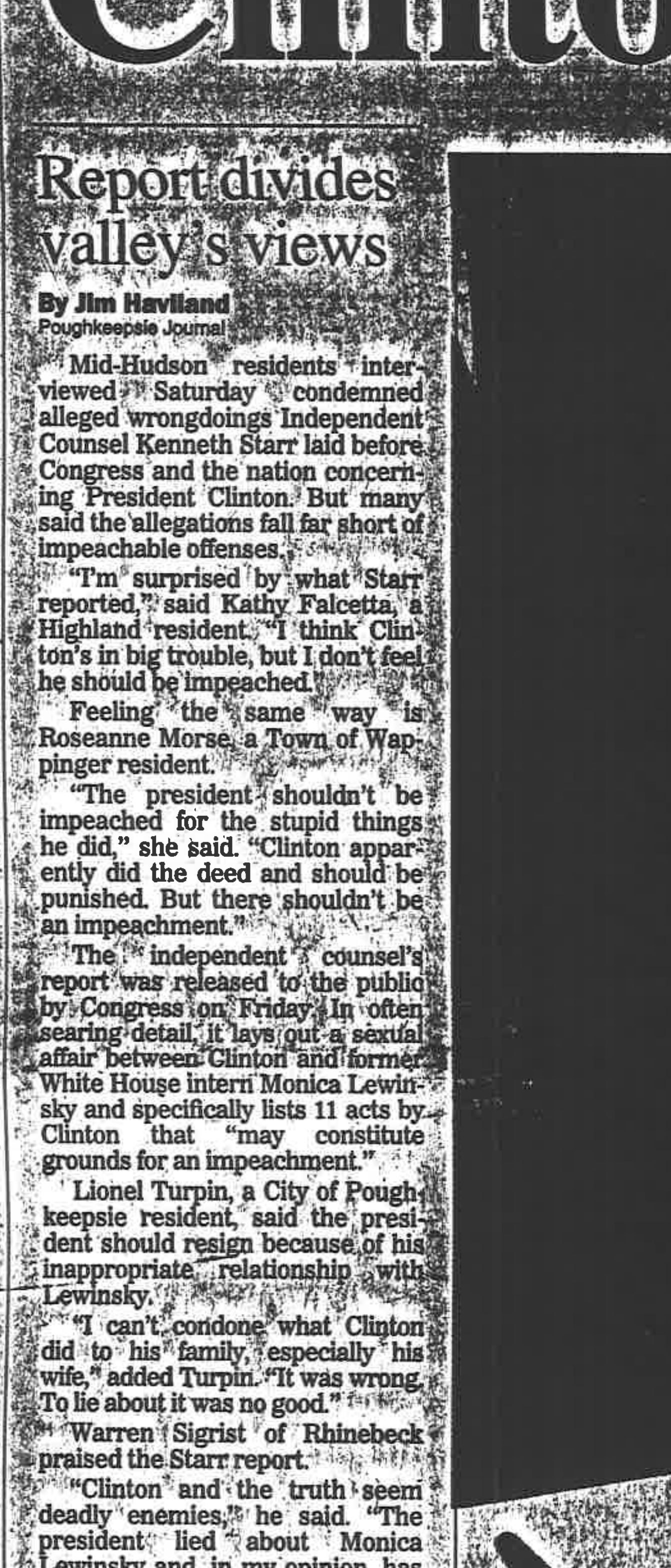
Maria Roglieri, of Hyde Park, agreed. "It's between him and his wife, Hillary. They shouldn't impeach him for that. I feel he does his job well as president."

Another Rhinebeck resident, Larry Montalto, wishes Starr would leave th

"I hate wh and feel he's he said. "But through an report. That' whole life and

David Ba keepsie, think gation has be

"If there president, th bly would t thing," he sai



President Clinton sits in the Oval Office after de dent announced local efforts to prevent substan federal program. The day after Independent C House readied another rebuttal attacking the pr

Politicians prep

STAR program

Fentress: Hearing set for Monday

Continued from 1A

him, as his lone witness, Witherwax said.

Fentress has lived at the facility for the past 15 years. He works at the computer center there and is permitted to leave the grounds, under escort, once a month to visit family members.

Because the Dutchess County district attorney's office first handled the case, it remains the prosecutor of record at any court proceedings. Witherwax, a Poughkeepsie native, who was one of Fentress' students at the middle school in 1974, has been handling the case for the past five years.

At the conclusion of his 1997 hearing, Fentress said he would welcome any communication from the Masters family if they wished to contact him. But the victim's father, Burt Masters, who now lives in California, said his family had made no attempt to talk to Fentress.

"Mr. Fentress has always had a credibility problem in our eyes," he said.

Masters thanked state and Dutchess County officials for the ongoing concern they have had about the case.

"We are very appreciative of the continuing efforts of the Dutchess County district attorney's office — first (former assistant DA) Thomas Dolan and now Wayne Witherwax — and the state attorney general for pursuing this case for so long," he said.

"It would have been easy for them to drop it and save a lot of money. But we think it's important the effort be continued."

increased the size of the buffer

said Lillian Wright, an Innis resi-

affect her property.

Stress poses relapse risk, doctor says

Lawyer: Fentress has proven himself

By Larry Fisher-Hertz
Poughkeepsie Journal

RIVERHEAD, Suffolk County — The psychiatrist who supervises Albert Fentress' treatment testified Tuesday that the former Poughkeepsie teacher isn't ready to leave the mental hospital where he has been confined for the past 15 years.

But Fentress' attorney challenged that assessment and said psychologists who work most closely with him would testify next week that he's ready to live in a halfway house.

Fentress

Those two views of Fentress — who killed, mutilated and cannibalized a Town of Poughkeepsie teenager in 1979 — are the topic of a hearing in Suffolk County Court.

The proceedings, which began Monday, are slated to resume next Wednesday. At the end of the hearing, Judge John Vaughn must decide whether Fentress should remain in the hospital or be transferred to a community residence, where he would have more freedom.

During Tuesday's hearing, psychiatrist Dr. Juliana Kanji acknowledged Fentress hadn't exhibited any psychotic behavior since he killed 18-year-old Paul Masters after luring him into the basement of his City of Poughkeepsie home on Aug. 20, 1979.

But Kanji said Fentress' psychosis is merely in remission and could resurface if Fentress is subjected to unusual stress.

"We must take into account his past behavior," Kanji said. "If he is exposed to the same kind of stress (that triggered the homicide), yes, it's possible he would have another breakdown."

Fentress' attorney, Kim Darrow, noted that Fentress had been exposed to stress at various times during his hospitalization. Darrow mentioned an incident in 1996 when another man on Fentress' ward at the hospital hanged himself and Fentress helped hospital employees take the body down from where it was hanging.

"Didn't he help the staff take the body down from the rope (and) didn't he cope with this stress?" Darrow asked Kanji, adding that Fentress' behavior during this and other stressful incidents had convinced members of his treatment team to recommend that Fentress be transferred to a community residence.

Fentress had 'flashback'

Kanji replied that Fentress had coped well — but only after experiencing a "flashback" in which he saw the face of his victim, Masters — and he then sought immediate counseling from his psychiatrist.

"If Mr. Fentress had been in a community residence when this happened," she said, "he wouldn't have had access to the support system he had in the hospital."

Under questioning by Dutchess County Assistant District Attorney Wayne Witherwax, Kanji noted that Fentress would have the option of refusing treatment and counseling if he were placed in a halfway house.

In response to a question from Darrow, Kanji conceded that Fentress had always accepted treatment and had never had a violent episode at any of the institutions where he has lived since 1980, when he was found not guilty by reason of insanity.

"But (Fentress' psychosis) could reactivate," Kanji replied. "It could show up again."

WHAT'S NEXT
FENTRESS HEARING

Albert Fentress' release hearing was suspended Tuesday following a day and a half of testimony.
The hearing is scheduled to resume next Wednesday at 10 a.m. in the Suffolk County criminal courts building in Riverhead.

Editorial 12A



Karl Rabe/Poughkeepsie Journal

...s the Brigade Staff after the for-
...ed States Military Academy in
...d with the Thayer Award, given
...xemplifies the military's motto.

"Always live by the code inscribed on your heart."
Retired Gen. Colin Powell
advice to cadets

...president in 1996, but his took himself out of consideration.

Powell's autobiography titled: "My American Journey," traces his life as the son of immigrants in Harlem through his successful military career.

He now serves as chairman of the America's Promise — the Alliance for Youth, a nonprofit organization that aims to better the life of impoverished youth.

Powell "truly is one, if not the, most admired man in America today," Hammack said.

...easure in shadow of history

...in landscape architecture on the Beatrix Farrand Garden.

The garden and the Bellefield estate are hardly known — and hard to find.

"My friend went to visit the garden at Bellefield, but she couldn't...

The garden rests on the south side of the house and is concealed by both the house and a stone wall that surrounds the garden.

Built in 1795 by Judge John Johnson, Bellefield has undergone many changes and owners over the...

Bellefield house
Bellefield, built in 1795, houses the administrative offices of the National Park Service.

Court won't free killer

By Larry Fisher-Hertz
Poughkeepsie Journal

RIVERHEAD, Suffolk County — Nineteen years after he killed and cannibalized a Poughkeepsie teenager, Albert Fentress is still dangerous and should remain in a mental hospital.



Fentress

That was the ruling from a judge Wednesday as a hearing on Fentress' mental competency concluded in Suffolk County Court.

Fentress, a Poughkeepsie Middle School history teacher, was seeking his release from Kings Park Psychiatric Center on Long Island, where he has lived for the past 16 years. He has been confined in mental institutions since 1980 when he admitted killing Spackenkill High School graduate Paul Masters, sexually mutilating him and eating some of his body parts.

Masters was killed on Aug. 20, 1979, and Fentress was found not guilty by reason of insanity after a team of psychiatrists determined he was psychotic at the time of the slaying.

Fentress contended during the three days of hearings that he was cured of mental illness and ought to be released to a halfway house. But less than a minute after the proceedings concluded Wednesday afternoon, Judge John Vaughn ruled that Fentress should not be set free.

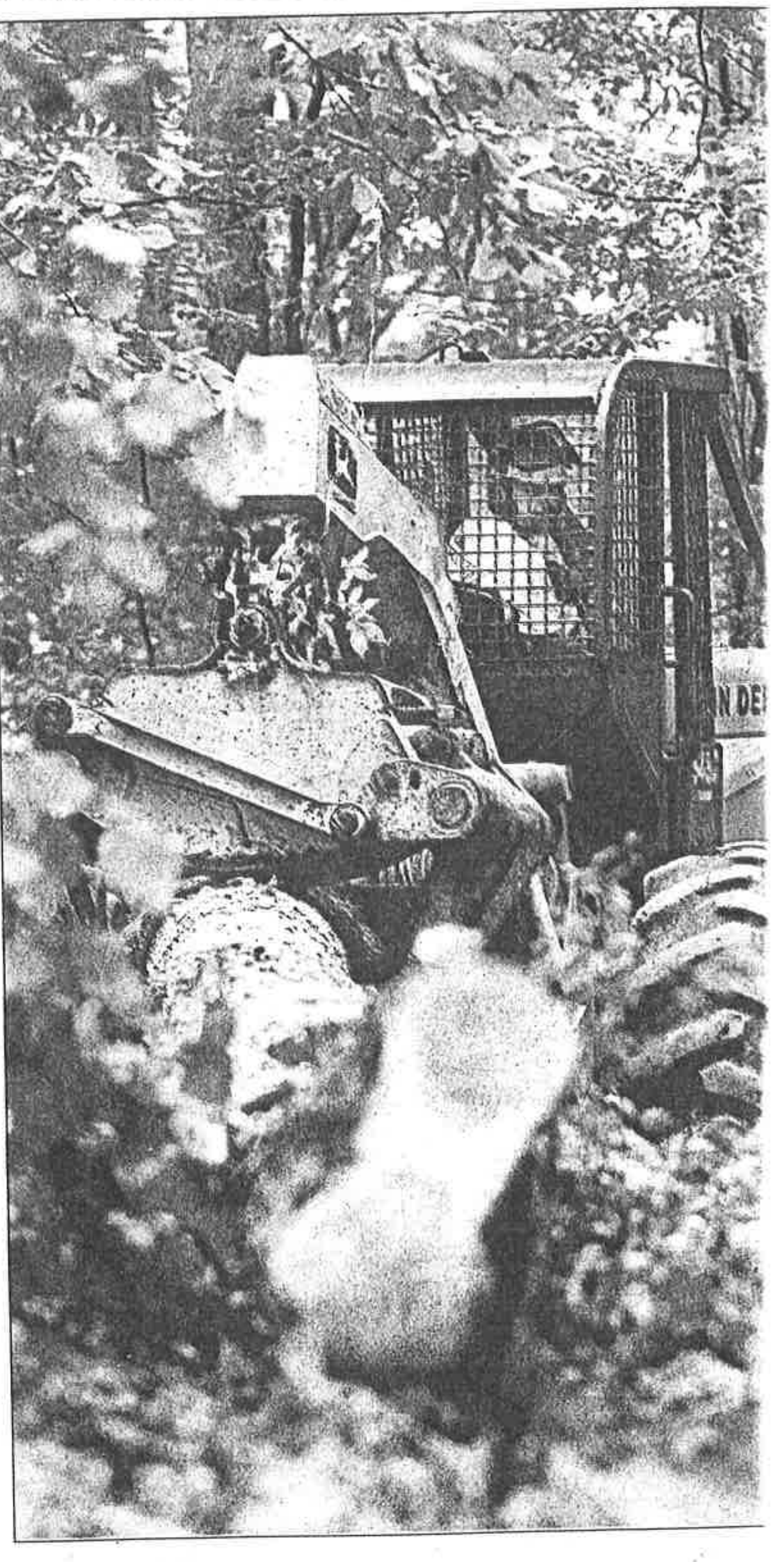
"The court believes the state has proven that Mr. Fentress suffers from mental illness and could be a danger and a risk to himself or others outside the structure of the

Please see **Fentress,** 2A

INSIDE

Weather

Forests sustain thriving indu



Edward 'Butch' Sivulich uses a skidder to drag out a large maple
man Hill Road in Red Hook. The Hudson Valley's quality hardwoo

Loggers compete for valley green

By Darren O'Sullivan
Poughkeepsie Journal

Mention the word logging and a lot of people might think of

Locally, forest product bus nesses — including sawmills, lo gers and related wood manufa turing businesses — account f 528 jobs in Dutchess County a

Fentress: Freedom denied

Continued from 1A

hospital," Vaughn said in his ruling from the bench.

Fentress, dressed in a blue blazer a light blue shirt and gray slacks, looked grim but said nothing to the judge or to reporters as he left the Suffolk County Criminal Courts Building. His lawyer, Kim Darrow of Mental Hygiene Legal Services, also declined to comment.

Dutchess County Assistant District Attorney Wayne Witherwax, who joined the state attorney general's office in opposing Fentress' release, said he was gratified by the judge's ruling.

"We in the district attorney's office are pleased with the result," Witherwax said. "We believe we provided more than enough evidence to enable the judge to rule in our favor."

Through a spokesman, Attorney General Dennis Vacco also hailed the ruling.

"By any yardstick, Albert Fentress is far too dangerous to release into the community," Vacco said.

A psychologist who treats Fentress, Dr. Lawrence Panza, testified Wednesday that he was ready for a transfer to a community residence. He said this partial step back into the community would provide adequate structure for Fentress while preparing him for living on his own.

Asked by Darrow if Fentress exhibited any symptoms of mental illness, Panza said his patient did not.

"There is no evidence of any behavior that is a threat (to himself or others) at all," Panza said.

But three expert witnesses who testified during the proceedings last week and on Wednesday morning disagreed with that assessment. On Wednesday, psychologist John D'Alessandro, a member of the psychiatric center's forensic committee, said the risks were too great to consider releasing Fentress from the hospital.

"At present he could potentially be a danger to others," D'Alessandro testified. "His level of controlled hostility is such that he could explode, under certain kinds of stress, and regress into the same dissociative state he was in when he committed the crime."

Two other expert witnesses — Dr. Michael Schwartz and Dr. Juliana Kanji, psychiatrists who examined Fentress earlier this year — both testified last week that Fentress was still mentally ill and was not ready to leave the hospital.

The retention order issued by Judge Vaughn expires in May 2000. At that time, Fentress will be eligible for release from the hospital unless a judge finds that he is still mentally ill and should retained.

LOTTERY RESULTS

Wednesday's numbers

New York

Daily number: 210 Win 4: 8879

Pick 10: 11, 14, 15, 16, 18, 21, 23, 29, 31, 36, 37, 43, 44, 49, 61, 66, 68, 72, 75, 77

Lotto: 39, 10, 44, 50, 3, 28 Supp. 18

Connecticut

Play Four: 0445 Nightly: 929

Mid-day 4: 3101 Mid-day 3: 588

Cash 5: 6, 9, 20, 23, 24

Powerball: 1, 5, 21, 22, 42 Ball: 18

GETTING IT RIGHT

The Poughkeepsie Journal corrects errors of fact. To report a correction or clarification, call (914) 437-4834.

Moon Phases




Sept. 28 Oct. 5 Oct. 12 Oct. 20

THE STARS

2 hours after sunset, can you see Saturn, low, just north of east, 40° lower left of brilliant Jupiter? In another 2 hours, Saturn climbs high enough to allow a clear telescopic view of its rings, now tipped 16° from edge-on. Look for it's brightest satellite, Titan.

Berkshires	60	45pc	Pawling	
Carmel	68	53 s	Poughke	
Catskills	62	45pc	Rhinebe	
Millbrook	67	47pc	Stewart	
Millerton	67	46pc	White Pl	

Legend: s-sunny, c-cloudy, pc-r-rain, sn-snow, i-ice.

WHERE TO CALL

For more weather inform National Weather Service, Alb 9580; for the U.S. Coast Guarc (212) 668-7114.

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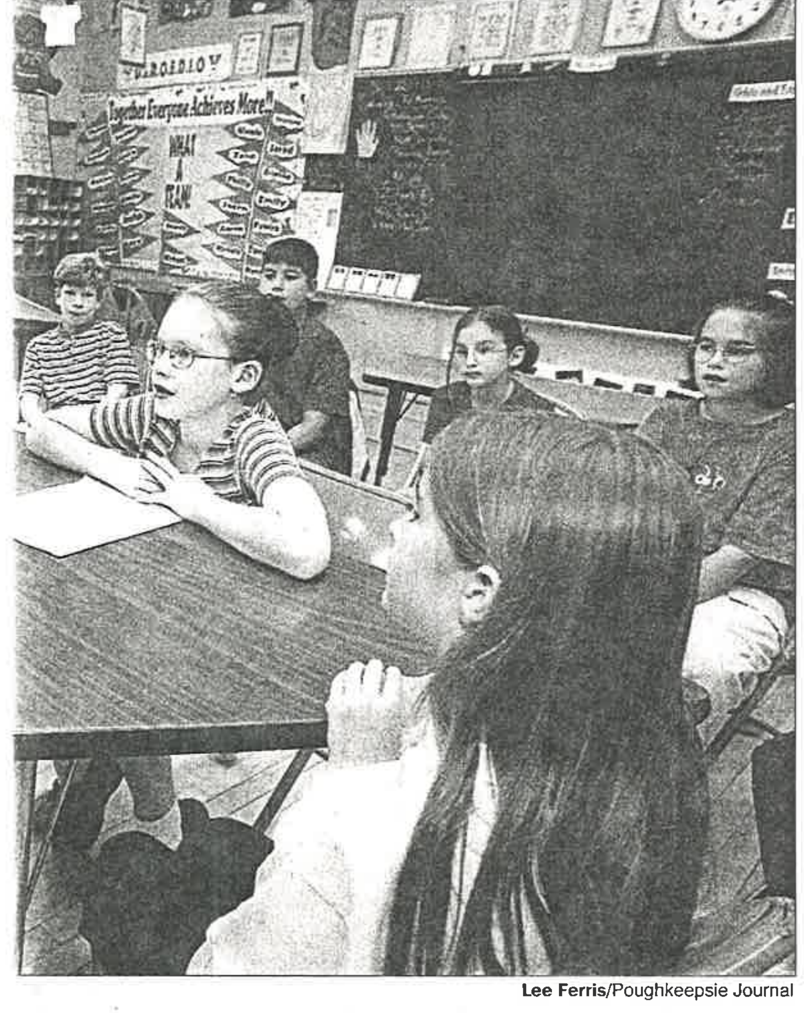
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...grams gain recognition



Lee Ferris/Poughkeepsie Journal

as the complainants to resolve a conflict about cutting in the lunch line. They are, from left, Joshua Ward, Billy Tresnan, Lexie Guccione and Kelly Devany.

...ppingers

...resolution.

This year's team is made up of six girls and four boys.

"I joined because people say that I'm good at helping others and I like to do that kind of stuff," said Emily Ritz, 10.

Added Gina Ragusa, 10: "I want to help kids with their problems."

Anyone involved with the school can apply for mediation help. Most of the time the conflict is between students, but there have been instances where the team was used to mediate between students and teachers or even a student and bus driver.

"It really, really, works," Powers said. "The fact that it comes from kids makes it more effective. The number of mediations is decreasing every year, so the program must be working."

For parents, there's the "Living with your 10- to 15-year-olds" program. The goal is to enhance communication between parent and child.

The third honored program is the "Safety Teams" that have been in place at John Jay High School.

> 'I joined because people say that I'm good at helping others and I like to do that kind of stuff.'
>
> **Emily Ritz**
> member of peer mediation team
> Fishkill Elementary School

The teams are made up of students, teachers, parents, psychologists and other staff who assess needs and potential problems.

"It's almost a prerequisite to learning to have a safe school environment," said John Jay High School Principal Mark Villanti.

The other state school district prominently featured is the Riverfront Consortium (Cohoes, Green Island, Lansingburgh and Watervliet schools).

"I'm proud that the state looked at all the districts and chose us as one of two," said Wappingers coordinator of counseling services, Rosemarie Gardner.

Superintendent Gersen is also proud.

"These programs have been here for a long time," he said. "I can't take too much credit for this. It's good to get the recognition."

Fentress hearing resumes

By Larry Fisher-Hertz
Poughkeepsie Journal

RIVERHEAD, Suffolk County — Two expert witnesses, one who believes Albert Fentress should remain in a mental hospital and another who contends he belongs in a halfway house, are set to testify as a hearing in the 19-year-old homicide case continues today in Suffolk County Court.

Fentress, 58, a former Poughkeepsie Middle School history teacher, was found not guilty by reason of insanity in 1980 in the 1979 slaying of 18-year-old Paul Masters.

Fentress admitted sexually mutilating, killing and then cannibalizing the Spackenkill High School graduate after luring him into his home in the City of Poughkeepsie on Aug. 20, 1979. He has been confined to mental institutions ever since, the last 15 years at Kings Park Psychiatric Center in Suffolk County.

Fentress

When the hearing began last week, Fentress' attorney, Kim Darrow, noted that psychologists and other members of Fentress' treatment team had recommended he be allowed to live in a community residence on the grounds of the Pilgrim Psychiatric Center, which shares a campus with Kings Park Psychiatric Center in Kings Park, Long Island.

Darrow is expected to call psychologist Lawrence Panza, a member of the treatment team, when the hearing resumes today.

Assistant State Attorney General Laurie Gatto and Dutchess County Assistant District Attorney Wayne Witherwax said they plan to call Dr. John D'Alassandro, a member of the Kings Park Psychiatric Center's forensic committee. County and state officials are sharing the job of opposing Fentress' release.

The committee decides on the status of patients who have been accused of crimes. The forensic committee has unanimously recommended that Fentress remain hospitalized.

Last week two psychiatrists told Suffolk County Court Judge John Vaughn that Fentress is still potentially dangerous and ought to be retained at the hospital.

Both psychiatrists conceded, under cross-examination by Darrow, that Fentress' illness could resurface, especially if he were subjected to certain stresses if he were released from the hospital.

..., hamlet struggles for identity

Rondout Creek around 1840 and built his estate there. Hasbrouck was a wealthy lawyer, who became a congressman and the president of Rutgers University.

Hasbrouck named St. Remy after his favorite resort in France. At his estate, which included some of the finest, forests and orchards in the area, he entertained many famous people, including three

> 'We rarely have any trouble around here. It's a great place to live.'
>
> **Marilyn Coffey**
> longtime St. Remy resident

let regularly. But Marilyn Coffey, a former supervisor and town clerk

St. Remy

A Town of Esopus hamlet, was once considered as a site for the United Nations headquarters. The area is named after a French resort.



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Kathy McLaughlin/Poughkeepsie Journal

New Assistant Attorney General Mary Kavaney in library of the New York State attorney general's Poughkeepsie office.

Fentress repeats plea for release

Mutilator claims sanity is recovered

By Larry Fisher-Hertz
Poughkeepsie Journal

RIVERHEAD, Suffolk County — A former Poughkeepsie school teacher who killed and cannibalized a teenager in 1979 is scheduled to make another bid for freedom from a mental institution this week.

Albert Fentress, 57, will ask a jury to decide that he should be released from Pilgrim Psychiatric Center on Long Island, where he has been confined for the past 15 years.

Fentress

Fentress, who was then a Poughkeepsie Middle School history teacher, admitted killing 18-year-old Paul Masters after luring the teen into his City of Poughkeepsie home on the night of Aug. 20, 1979. Fentress then ate some of Masters' body parts.

He was found not guilty by reason of insanity in 1980 and sent to Mid-Hudson Psychiatric Center in Orange County, where he lived for four years before being transferred to Kings Park Psychiatric Center on Long Island. Kings Park and Pilgrim later merged into a single facility, and Fentress has been living there since 1984.

Fourth bid for release

This week's proceedings in state Supreme Court in Suffolk County mark the fourth time that Fentress has sought to be released from confinement. Suffolk County Court judges turned down his requests in April 1994, April 1997 and again in September 1998.

But under state law, Fentress has the right to appeal the judge's ruling and ask that a six-person jury decide whether he ought to be retained. This week's hearing, slated to begin Tuesday before Acting Supreme Court Judge Richard Klein, marks the first time Fentress has asked for such a review of his case. He is being represented by Kim Darrow, an attorney for Mental Hygiene Legal Services in Hempstead.

Darrow declined to comment on the case. But Dutchess County Assistant District Attorney Wayne Witherwax, who is opposing Fentress' release, said he expected Darrow to call several psychiatrists and psychologists who will claim Fentress has been cured of his mental illness.

Witnesses are expected to include Dr. Lawrence Panza, a psychologist and a member of Fentress' treatment team, and Dr. Azariah Eshknenazi, a psychiatrist who testified at Fentress' 1997 and 1998 hearings that he was no longer a danger to himself or others.

Aides may be witnesses

Witherwax said he also expected Darrow to call several aides from Pilgrim Psychiatric Center who have accompanied Fentress on escorted visits to his family's home and events off the Pilgrim campus.

Witherwax and attorneys from the state attorney general's office say they will call members of the hospital's forensics team to testify that Fentress is still potentially dangerous. In addition, Witherwax said he would ask City of Poughkeepsie Police Chief Ronald Knapp to tell the jury details about the 1979 slaying.

Knapp, who was a patrolman at the time of the killing, was one of the first officers to comb Fentress' basement for evidence and to take photographs of the crime scene.

WHAT'S NEXT

FENTRESS HEARING

Selection begins Tuesday for the six-person jury who will hear Albert Fentress's request for release from Pilgrim Psychiatric Center in Suffolk County. Fentress has been confined for the past 15 years after being found not guilty by reason of insanity in 1980 for the killing and cannibalization of Poughkeepsie teenager Paul Masters.

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month, Hiscock traced the recent popularity of that notion to a "Trivial Pursuit" question dated 1986, which was ultimately linked to what appears to be a "Sky and Telescope" intern's misinterpretation in 1946 of an obscure 1937 "Maine Farmers' Almanac" article.

As for their meaning, Elmegreen suggested that blue moons be seen as good luck symbols.

"Full moons are pretty, so if there are two of them it must be good," she said.

But, whatever meaning or title you prefer to give to them, we will see two blue moons this year, next week and on March 31. For Vassar Brothers Hospital's labor and delivery unit, that means staff will be on alert.

"Usually when the full moons come, we know that we're going to have a lot of deliveries," said unit Manager Cookie Shaw, who said full moons tend to bring strange events such as first-time mothers giving birth in cars with little warning.

"The gravity of the moon does something to them. It's an unusual time."

Darren O'Sullivan's Out There column appears every Sunday. You can reach him at 437-4827 or by e-mail at deos1@aol.com.

Environmental notes 2B

Witness calling stalls Fentress' release bid

RIVERHEAD, Suffolk County — A former Poughkeepsie school teacher who killed and cannibalized a teenager in 1979 will have to wait a few weeks before he makes his next bid for freedom from a mental hospital.

A hearing in the case of Albert Fentress, 57, was scheduled to begin today. But acting state Supreme Court Judge Richard Klein ruled Monday that before the proceedings begin, state and Dutchess County authorities have the right to interview several witnesses who were set to testify on Fentress' behalf.

Dutchess County Assistant District Attorney Wayne Witherwax said he planned to interview the witnesses — aides at Pilgrim Psychiatric Center who have observed Fentress while he has been on escorted furloughs from the facility — as early as next week.

The hearing will be convened after all of the witnesses are interviewed, Witherwax said, probably in two or three weeks.

The Dutchess County District Attorney's office and the state attorney general's office are opposing Fentress' release.



Fentress

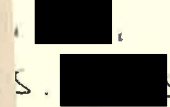
Fentress admitted killing 18-year-old Paul [redacted] after luring the Spackenkill High School graduate into his home on the night of Aug. 20, 1979. He then ate some of [redacted] body parts. Fentress was employed at the time as a history teacher at Poughkeepsie Middle School.

A judge ruled in 1980 that Fentress was not responsible for his actions because he was insane at the time of the slaying. He has been confined in psychiatric centers for the past 18 years.

Fentress' bids for release from the institution have been turned down three times in the past five years, most recently in September 1998. Under state law, he has the right to ask a six-person jury to overturn those decisions.

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HOWEVER, I'M AFRAID THAT IF THE PUBLIC LETS THIS DIE, SOMEDAY THIS ANIMAL WILL BE LET LOOSE INTO SOCIETY. PLEASE DO NOT LET THIS HAPPEN.

VERY TRULY YOURS,

Sherry Q. [redacted]

... in the case was sched... But acting ... Court Judge R... ruled Monday that befo... proceedings begin, state Dutchess County authorities h... the right to interview several w... nesses who were set to testify o... Fentress' behalf.

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Shirley A. [redacted]

[redacted]

Poughkeepsie, New York 12603

JANUARY 29, 1999

DEAR DISTRICT ATTORNEY GRADY,

I AM WRITTING TO YOU CONCERNING THE ENCLOSED ARTICLE. MY SON, [redacted] WAS A FRIEND OF [redacted] MURDER WAS DEVASTATING TO HIS FAMILY AND FRIENDS, WHO WERE YOUNG ADULTS AT THAT TIME.

I HAVE WRITTEN TO YOUR OFFICE BEFORE ASKING THAT ALBERT FENTRESS NEVER BE RELEASED. I RECEIVED A REPLY, ASSURING ME THAT HE NEVER WOULD BE. HOWEVER, I'M AFRAID THAT IF THE PUBLIC LETS THIS DIE, SOMEDAY THIS ANIMAL WILL BE LET LOOSE INTO SOCIETY. PLEASE DO NOT LET THIS HAPPEN.

VERY TRULY YOURS,

Shirley A. [redacted]

Killer's Quest For Freedom

Bid for furlough sparks debate over insanity defense

First of two parts

By Jamie Talan
STAFF WRITER

'I have come to understand ... how I could have done such a horrible thing. Doctors tell me I am better, and I know I am.'



Fentress in the '70s

Albert Fentress rises early, before the din of each new day at the Kings Park Psychiatric Center, hoping to claim a clean shower stall ahead of the 35 other patients who sleep on locked Ward 122. At breakfast, his eyes sweep the room, gauging where he can eat without being threatened with a breakfast knife, or sit without watching someone cough up the morning fare. When he leaves, he must find a staffer with a key to open a thick metal door with no inside handle.

By 8 a.m., he is at work at the facility's computer learning center, a trim, polished man with wire-rimmed bifocals, pressed jeans, and an autumn tan acquired in late-day walks on the hospital grounds to a bluff that overlooks the bay. Often, staff members say, he'll work through lunch tutoring anyone who seeks his help, giving patients perhaps their best chance at surviving a future outside the psychiatric hospital.

To many of the mental health professionals at Kings Park, Albert Fentress is the most exemplary of patients — a quiet island of reserve, helpfulness and sanity in a difficult environment, a man finally at peace with himself.

To many of the hospital's neighbors and others, however, he is something quite different. While he may look and act the part of the fastidious, conscientious history teacher he was 15 years ago, Albert Fentress will remain in their minds the living embodiment of one of society's greatest taboos.

"Oh! The Cannibal?" Kings Park neighbor Melanie Haley says simply, descriptively, when asked about Fentress. "Just keep him locked up."

In August, 1979, Fentress — playing out a bizarre fantasy he had scripted days before — tied up a young man named Paul Masters in his Poughkeepsie home, mutilated him, shot him to death, then cooked parts of his body and apparently ate them. Ruled not guilty by reason of insanity, Fentress has spent his time since then receiving in-depth psychoanalysis and psychotherapy at two state mental hospitals.

Now, at age 53, Fentress — in the first interview he's allowed — says he's sorry Paul Masters "stepped into a nightmare that destroyed him," but he adds that the nightmare he was back then — a psychotic man captured in the grip of a fearsome paranoia — no longer exists. Now, with 15 years of therapy behind him, Albert Fentress says emphatically that he wants and deserves his freedom, the first step being unsupervised visits to his parents' home, a 30-minute drive from the hospital.

"I have been through such pain over what I did," Fentress recently told a reporter. "Through treatment I have come to understand what happened to me, and how I could have done such a horrible thing. Doctors tell me I am better, and I know I am."

But Fentress also knows his quest, which already has hit some major roadblocks, won't be simple. While a dozen psychiatric professionals agree it's time to begin a process that eventually could free him, others — many others, including dozens of Kings Park residents, two state senators, several law enforcement officials and the psychiatrist they hired — disagree.

"I think he belongs in jail," says Gregory Szurnicki, a 71-year-old retired hospital employee and civic association leader who is opposing Fentress' release. "He beat the rap."

The face-off between the psychiatric community supporting Fentress and the community at large is an important one, experts say, because it goes to the very core of the state's rarely used insanity defense. The law says that a person ruled not guilty of a crime because of his mental state shouldn't be punished, but rather should be treated until he's no longer a public threat. And then, it says, he should be released, though it allows for conditions to that release.

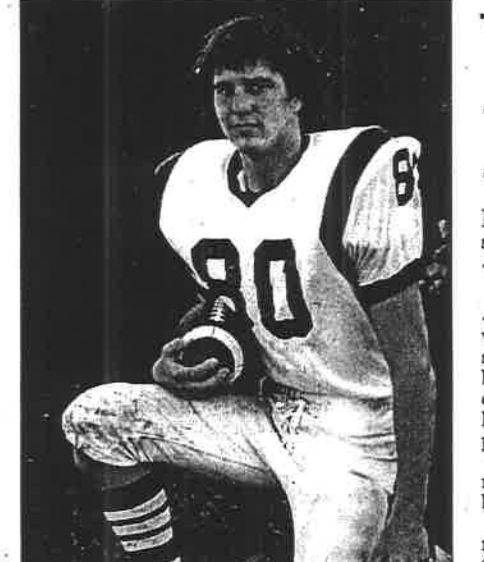
There are 151 patients acquitted of various crimes by reason of insanity who are currently in secure forensic hospitals throughout the state. Fentress is one of the 300 others who are in non-secure hospitals, and 330 are placed in a conditional release program.

These numbers almost always remain constant as insanity-plea patients get better and move through the mental-health system.

Fentress' supporters argue that keeping him under constant supervision is both limiting his therapy and punishing him — a clear violation, they say, of the law's spirit and intent. Had he been found guilty of second-degree murder, he would have spent a minimum of 15 years in prison, meaning he would have been up for parole right now.

"A lot of people would like to see him drooling in a corner," said Joyce Fermo, a nurse administrator

Victim's Family: 'How Do We Know for Sure?'



Paul Masters in his varsity football uniform

By Jamie Talan
STAFF WRITER

Barbara Masters is staring down death. Again.

She did it 15 years ago when her son was brutally murdered by a stranger. She did it seven years ago when she was diagnosed with breast cancer, which is now in remission. She is doing it today as chemotherapy courses through her bloodstream fighting another lethal invader: pancreatic cancer.

As the mother of five makes peace with a terminal diagnosis, she is — admittedly — putting other battles behind her.

"I can't see the end of my life without forgiveness," she says of Albert Fentress, a former history teacher who brutally tortured and killed her youngest son a day from entering college. "But I don't think society should take a chance and let him out."

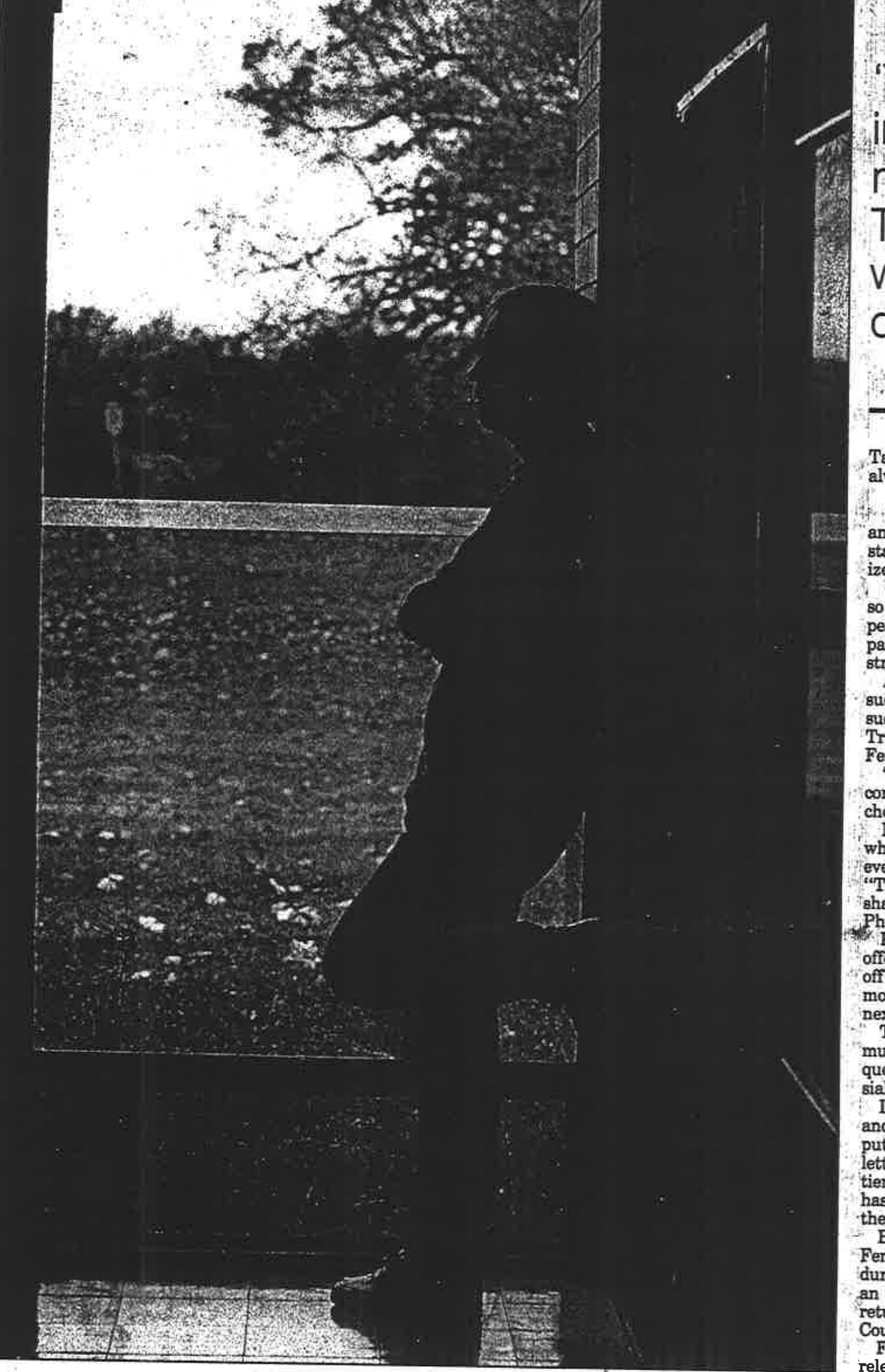
Paul Masters was an honor student who loved football. To mark his short life, an equipment shed that bears his name sits on the field at Spackenkill High School, just outside of Poughkeepsie. His football number — 80 — was never used again. Pictures of Paul — winner of a Regents scholarship, the boy who worked all summer to save $600 to help pay for college, the boy who loved cars — are scattered throughout his parents' home in San Jose, Calif.

On the 10th anniversary of his class reunion, she said, Paul's high school girlfriend delivered flowers to the Masters family. The next day they received a card from Paul's classmates.

They had all moved on in life. But in their memories, she said, Paul was still 18.

Since their son's death, Barbara and Burt Mas-

Please see MOTHER on Page A40



Newsday / Julia Gaines

Fentress looks out a window of the Rehab building, where he works at the computer center

who has become one of a dozen ardent supporters of Fentress. "We tend to pick him apart and analyze every behavior. We don't hold ourselves to the standards we expect from him."

"They've had him under a microscope for so long, and he has never shown any troubling behavior," says Dr. John Baer Train, one of dozens of psychiatrists who have examined and / or treated Fentress. "His treatment was excellent. He is no longer mentally ill or dangerous."

Dr. Cemil Bikmen, a psychiatrist who treated Fentress for more than a year, argues that the law as constituted puts psychiatry itself on trial, along with the patient. He and other doctors recommended that Fentress be allowed unsupervised visits with his parents, he says, but "the system didn't trust me" and the court turned them down.

Others argue that there are no guarantees the demons that caused Fentress to snap in the first place are gone — medical reports or no medical reports. "It is very difficult to predict future dangerousness," says John Monahan, a professor of law and psychology at the University of Virginia.

Last month, Suffolk County Court Judge Alfred Tisch ruled Fentress shouldn't be allowed the unsupervised visits despite testimony from six psychiatric professionals urging such visits. Only one doctor, hired by the Dutchess County district attorney's office, testified that Fentress could still be a danger to society.

Tisch, who has received dozens of letters from Kings Park residents opposing the release, made his ruling without explanation, according to Leslie De-Lia, a lawyer from the Mental Hygiene Legal Service who represents Fentress.

Tisch's law clerk, Ira Simon, acknowledged, however, that the decision was a difficult one: 'You've got to take into consideration the nature of the crime," Simon argued. "These are gut-wrenching, God-like decisions."

Now, Fentress has been told that while the hospital still formally supports his bid, no new action is planned — leaving him in a no man's land with no apparent exit.

Noting that he's seen many insanity-plea patients leave the hospital over the years, Fentress said, "these decisions are made with the greatest care. Take them small, take them as slow as you want, I've always said. But just give me a chance."

'You've got to take into consideration the nature of the crime. These are gut-wrenching, God-like decisions.'

— Ira Simon, law clerk to Suffolk County Court Judge Alfred Tisch

* * *

To look at Albert Fentress, to hear an intelligent and thoughtful man talk about his search to understand how he could so brutally murder and cannibalize a stranger, is to question the very nature of sanity.

Can humans just snap? Can mental illness come on so suddenly, exploding in a violent thunder and disappearing as quickly? Or was there some deep-rooted pathology that was covered up for so long by the structure of a successful life?

And, most importantly, are there treatments for such dark and puzzling emotions that can guarantee such bizarre, destructive behavior won't be repeated? Train, the forensic psychiatrist who has examined Fentress extensively five times since 1980, thinks so.

"The dissociative psychosis that occurred in 1979 is completely resolved with in-depth insight into its psychodynamics," Train told a court in 1988.

It's unclear if all the doctors within the state system who have seen Fentress agree. But some other experts, even other psychiatric professionals, aren't so sure. "The truth is only as accurate as a person is willing to share," said Robert Prentky, a forensic psychologist in Philadelphia. "We have all made mistakes."

Prentky, who has treated hundreds of violent sex offenders, speaks from experience. He recently signed off on a Massachusetts inmate who he thought was a model patient. When the inmate was released the next year, he murdered two women.

There are no easy answers. But Fentress — as much as any one person possibly can — illustrates the questions and issues surrounding the often controversial and confusing insanity plea.

Lean and athletic, clean and well-dressed, scholarly and conscientious, Fentress runs the hospital's computer program, was once editor of the facility's newsletter, and is an ardent advocate for his fellow patients. Doctors say he doesn't break rules and that he has never acted out in a violent way — in many ways, they say, he is the picture of normality.

Born in Brooklyn on July 20, 1941, Albert Francis Fentress' early childhood was spent in Venezuela, during which time his father, an engineer, supervised an oil field. After seven years, however, the family returned to New York and bought land in Suffolk County, beginning a small tomato farm.

Fentress, who agreed to be interviewed but not to release his medical records, said he was an honor student at that point who filled his afternoons with music, debating and drama. On the weekend, he worked on the family farm. He tells doctors that his relationship with his mother was warm and supportive but that his father was strict.

In 1965, after obtaining a master's degree in education and history, Fentress began teaching high school history in Poughkeepsie, buying a small ranch home on Grand Avenue. Despite his modest teacher's salary, he had an expensive stamp collection, a Rolex watch, a collection of historical signatures, crystal, antiques and a penchant for Cadillacs.

He loved teaching. And former students say they would never forget his classes.

"He became a character in the lesson," said Elizabeth Schwartz, a former student. Sometimes, he would dress in Civil War gear, she said. For a discussion of racism, he'd wear a Ku Klux Klan robe to show how frightening it was.

Fentress, who never married, said in a recent interview that his paranoia began to take shape in 1978, when some kids broke into his home and stole his prized stamp collection. Even though the local police managed to get the stamps back, he became

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Killer's Quest for Freedom:



Barbara Masters, left, with Paul, her youngest of five children

'Can't Play God'

MOTHER from Page A6

ters have traveled to every hearing that was held for Albert Fentress. They were there when he requested a transfer to a non-secure facility. They were there when the state applied for escorted furloughs. And most recently, Barbara Masters flew 3,000 miles to fight Fentress' request for unescorted furloughs.

"If we didn't get involved, he would be on the street again," said Masters, who celebrated her 44th wedding anniversary this year.

But now, she said she is tired and sick, and she doesn't feel the fight in her anymore. "We can't play God," she said. "As far as I'm concerned, if there is another hearing, we have fought enough."

Among his family and doctors, Fentress has wept openly about killing Paul Masters. But on the numerous occasions that Fentress has been in court, the Masterses said that he stared forward, seemingly without emotion. They said they have never felt any remorse from the man whose every legal battle brings them to court.

"He may be completely cured. He may be remorseful. He may never do this again. But how do we know for sure?" said Paul's father, who teaches engineering.

"Psychiatry is such an inexact science," his wife adds. "We would do anything to make sure this doesn't happen to another family."

The Masters also suggest that Fentress must have plenty to hide since his lawyers have done everything legally possible to keep the public from hearing any medical testimony in his case. Fentress' lawyer filed a pre-trial motion arguing that the public should not have access to confidential clinical material presented in court.

The family has never had access to any hospital files on Fentress.

Paul Masters was the youngest of five children. He loved baseball, track and football. He was on the varsity football team throughout high school and was hoping to play as a student at the State University of New York at Albany. Paul had a penchant for beat-up cars. "He loved to fix them," his father said. "He'd buy cheap cars and spend hours working on them."

He also loved camping.

Barbara Masters was never the kind of mother who relaxed when her children were out for the evening. Every siren would wake her. "I'd put the pillow over my head and pray."

Then, on August 20, 1979, the knock on the door in the middle of the night came with shocking news that their son had been shot and killed. Later, as the case unwound, the couple would learn the gruesome details that Fentress not only castrated their son, but ate his genitals.

"It was hard to get all the images of the torture out of my mind," Barbara Master's wrote in a journal she has kept since Paul's death.

During the first Christmas after Paul's death, Barbara took out his football and uniform and scores of pictures. She built a shrine to her son in the living room, around the Christmas tree.

The day that Fentress was found not guilty by reason of insanity, the couple piled into a aging Volkswagen Bug and drove to California. Burt Masters had worked for IBM and gladly accepted a transfer.

They moved into a condominium next to a church, which would be the beginning of Barbara Masters' healing. The Catholic priest provided counseling, helping the grieving mother say goodbye to her son.

She also became involved with a local chapter of Parents of Murdered Children and has maintained a letter-writing campaign to congressmen and friends in New York.

"Our religion and faith helped a lot," she said during a recent interview. "I feel pressured to do something."

She is now undergoing chemotherapy. She says she is beating the odds. Doctors told her last summer that she had only a few months to live. The couple recently took a trip to Alaska and continue making plans to see their children and grandchildren. "There is so much to live for," she added.

INSANITY from Page A7

frightened and paranoid, and bought a gun.

"I realized how fragile I was — my house and my furnishings — to be the best dressed," he says now. "I couldn't exist without them."

Later, he said, the students broke into his home on more than a dozen occasions, poured chemicals on his lawn, and sent magazine subscriptions to his home. He thinks they continued the harassment because their names were linked to the stolen stamps, and because other students were annoyed at them.

Although it wasn't apparent publicly, Fentress said, he was beginning to feel pressure emotionally as the vandalism destroyed possessions that helped him feel successful. On Friday, Aug. 18, 1979, Fentress found himself writing a bizarre fantasy of revenge. After two hours, his arm cramped. He remembers reading the script, then burning the papers.

On Sunday, however, he started writing again and, after three hours, realized he had written an equally horrifying script. He burned it, too.

A few hours later, he would meet Paul Masters, who was hanging out with friends on his last night in Poughkeepsie before entering college. Masters, 18, who had played football at a nearby high school, had been drinking with a group of friends when players from rival teams got into a fight, according to police accounts. When police responded, the young men started running and Masters wound up on Fentress' lawn.

Fentress ran out with his licensed .38-caliber pistol hidden under his shirt, confronting Masters.

"I told him to move on," Fentress recalled.

Moments later, Fentress said, Masters ran onto a service road on the back of his property. After a few nervous moments, they talked, even drinking vodka together. Eventually, Masters said he needed a ride home, and Fentress offered his help.

But things changed quickly at that point. Fentress went inside for his car keys, and saw the basement light on. His rigid need for order meant that lights were never left on, and his paranoia returned.

Armed with his gun, he brought Masters down to the basement. There, he tied him to a basement pole, sexually abused him, castrated him, and shot him twice in the head. Then he cooked the genitals, and apparently ate them.

The bizarre fantasy he had been writing earlier that day simply came alive, he says now: "While this [the attack] was going on, I kept saying, 'This is the script . . . this is the script,' " he recalled. "I was screaming in my head, 'Why is this happening? It's the script.' "

Later, psychiatric reports would say that Fentress could not deal with stress that had been building in his mind since the theft of his stamps a year before. "It undermined the carefully constructed image which masked his anxieties and protected him from fears," Train said. "Also contributing to the stress was Fentress' discovery that he had homosexual tendencies."

Fentress believes that he so totally repressed his homosexual urgings that he had to destroy the young man's genitals. "By destroying it, you eat it," he said. "There was no decision there."

In the aftermath, police searched his house for other signs that would reveal a dark and sinister history of sadism, but there were none. "If you knew him before, you would have never known," said Roland Witherwax, the detective sergeant who handled the report of Fentress' stolen stamps and the murder.

• • •

Albert Fentress spent the first 15 months after his arrest in jail without special psychiatric treatment.

During this time, court records show, Fentress' attorney tried to have the murder charges dropped on a technicality. He charged that lawyer-client confidentiality was breached when the mother of the attorney Fentress called after the attack summoned police.

The argument was rejected, then appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, which denied the application.

To this day, however, Paul Masters' mother, Barbara, says that this argument made her uncertain as to just how insane he was. "If it was genuine, why didn't he do it [seek the insanity plea] from the beginning?" she asks.

Once Fentress' lawyer put forth an insanity defense, he was examined by psychiatrists employed by the prosecution and the defense, and both sides agreed he was insane at the time of the murder.

After a two-day hearing, the judge agreed as well, finding Fentress not guilty by reason of insanity.

There has been some form of the insanity defense since the Middle Ages. The law argues that because of a mental illness, a person either didn't know his criminal behavior was wrong or was unable to stop himself. Thus, he should be treated for his illness, not punished for his actions.

In 1980, Fentress was one of 79 defendants charged with a number of different crimes in New York State to claim the defense. Nationally, experts say, there are about two insanity pleas attempted for every 1,000 felony arrests, and only 25 percent of those attempts are successful.

In most cases in which it is successful, including Fentress' case, the defense is quickly accepted by both sides because of the nature of the psychiatric testimony. Otherwise, the case goes before a jury to weigh what are often subtle, complicated diagnoses from competing experts. Then, according to many legal experts, the situation tends



'A lot of people would like to see him drooling in a corner. ... We don't hold ourselves to the standards we expect from him.'

— Joyce Fermo, nurse administrator

Please see INSANITY on Next Page

Debate on Insanity Defense

:o favor the prosecution because the ›nly inarguable fact remaining is that a :rime was committed.

Additionally, defense attorneys are vell aware of studies that show that if hey lose with an insanity defense, heir clients usually end up with longer ail terms.

After Fentress was ruled not guilty, ie was remanded to the custody of the tate Office of Mental Health and ransferred to Mid-Hudson Psychiatric 'enter, a maximum-security hospital 1 New Hampton, N.Y.

There, he would be provided with herapists to cure what doctors origin-lly suspected was a paranoid schizo-hrenic disorder, which was later dis-iissed. Any privileges that extended eyond the hospital walls first would ave to go through the Office of Mental ealth in Albany, and then through ie courts.

At Mid-Hudson, Fentress eventually und a therapist — Robert Weltman - who helped him begin to put the eces of his life together. After five ears, at the doctor's urging, the state iccessfully petitioned the court to ansfer him to a non-secure facility. e was sent to Kings Park.

There, he met John Pruslow, an edu-tion administrator who immediately elcomed his teaching experience. Pruslow was just setting up a few new mputers for the patients' use when ntress arrived. Soon, Fentress began aching on them, and eventually be-me editor of a patient newsletter.

"He's shown himself to be extremely mpetent, responsible and compas-nate for others," said Pruslow, who now education director at Sagamore ildren's Center.

At the same time, however, Fentress s he became a target of resentment some at the facility — both because his past, and because he felt it was portant to stand up for his rights and rights of other patients there.

le'd ask for quiet in the wee hours of night when staff would chat loudly he large ward of sleeping men. He'd a staff member to take a urine-ked patient to the showers. He'd an emphatic "No!" when staff de-nded that patients clean up garbage the employee parking lot prior to a e inspection.

or years, he sat on the hospital's pa-t advisory board, a group that met nthly to discuss problems. "Some-es, there is such little respect for pa-ts," said Fentress.

'hile his therapists saw improve-ts in Fentress, rewarding him with nded privileges, others became e and more upset with him, he says.

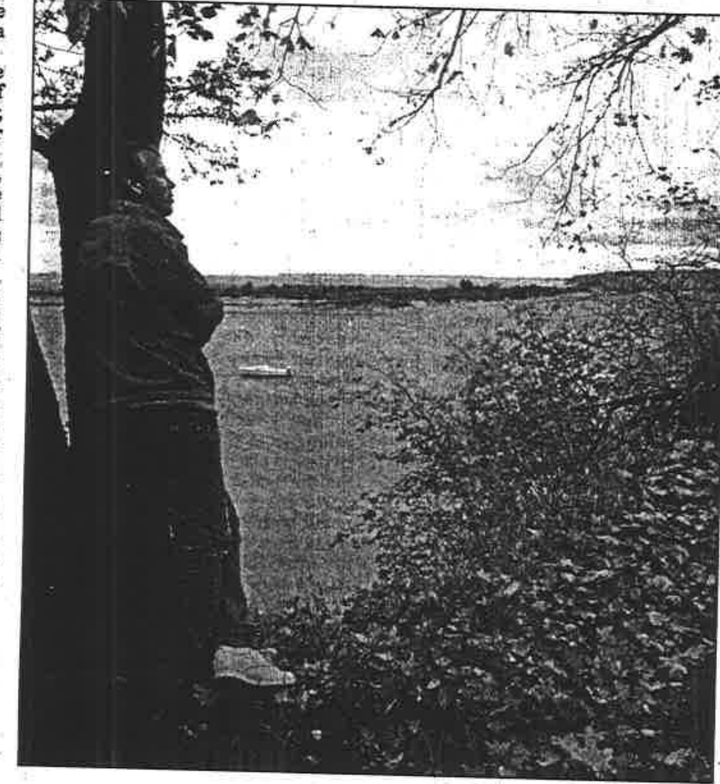
no sooner got my first treatment [which meant he could walk unat-ed on the grounds of the 596-acre ital] and I was reported driving lessly down the boulevard [the 1 road through the hospital] in a apy aide's car," Fentress recalls.

ien, community residents and hos-staff members began complaining lministrators that Fentress had seen in town unsupervised, which bidden without the court's approv-

. was ridiculous," recalls Pruslow, said that he always knew Fentress be found peering into a computer tor. "I'd get calls from the unit. ress is in town.' I'd say, 'That's ssible. He's right here.' "

e day a colleague told Pruslow he had "just passed Al's twin on ing Avenue." Fentress, mean-, was sitting nearby.

r the years, a dozen other staff ers reported seeing the twin — he hospital director. Finally, one istrator who thought he saw



Newsday / Julia Gaines

Fentress spends most afternoons at what he sees as his own quiet corner of the facility: a bluff on the hospital grounds that overlooks the harbor.



Fentress, shown more than 15 years ago, teaches a high school history class in Poughkeepsie dressed in Civil War gear to illustrate the lesson.

Fentress at Cheap John's in Kings Park followed him.

"At first glance, he looked just like him," said the administrator, who asked that his name not be used. "But then, when he came closer, it just wasn't him." He followed the "double" and saw that he went into an apartment across the street.

Community activists have also reported Fentress walking alone in town.

The frequent reports led Judge Tisch in 1990 to remove Fentress' grounds privileges, though there was no formal investigation into the allegations. This was done during a routine retention hearing, held every two years to determine whether patients are still mentally ill and require hospitalization. On appeal, the court reversed Tisch's decision, saying he had no legal right to alter treatment privileges on the grounds of the hospital.

It took nine months, however, for the appeal to be successful.

"I felt very badly for Al," said June Lanzer, a Kings Park resident and former hospital employee who has known Fentress since he arrived at Kings Park. When she ran an occupational therapy workshop at the hospital, she said, Fentress was part of her program.

"We had locked rooms with anywhere from twenty to forty people," she said. "I depended on Al to help me. Patients respected him and he could sometimes calm them down quicker than I could. I just felt more secure with him there."

"There are two camps of people" at the hospital who take notice of Fentress, explains Sheldon Friedman, a hospital psychologist who has treated him since 1989. "Those who hate him and those who don't."

In fact, Fentress has made a lot of friends among staff, which means a lot of small perks, in the guise of treatment, comes his way. Twice a month, for instance, a nurse taking a dinner break accompanies him to a nearby supermarket to pick up snacks he then sells to other patients at the hospital.

He also joins other patients on supervised summer beach trips and feasts on lobster overlooking the Port Jefferson harbor. Usually, two staff members accompany half a dozen patients. He's been to the Statue of Liberty, the Museum of Modern Art, Ellis Island.

He also has glimmers of freedom when he is allowed, with the blessing of his doctor and the hospital, to visit his family with supervision once a week.

On one cool October afternoon, he is cooking a roast, whipping squash and baking two apple pies — one for the neighbors. He spends the afternoon weeding overgrown gardens and tending his family's two-acre tomato farm. Once inside the cozy two-story house, Ursula Lisnoff, the therapy aide who is charged with supervising him, makes her secret recipe for potato pancakes while Fentress prepares fresh applesauce.

Fentress' mother is recovering from hip surgery. His parents show a reporter pictures of their three children when they were young, and their grandchildren. A Ray Charles tape pipes through the house.

While Lisnoff has become more like family during these home visits, she says that Fentress "doesn't need escorted visits. There's never been anything out of the ordinary."

At the hospital, meanwhile, Fentress has started a printing business, offering a variety of desktop publishing services.

In the morning, students come to the computer lab to learn Word Perfect and Quark Express programs. He spends the afternoon working on posters, wedding invitations or business cards. Fentress gets paid $100 for his 50-hour week, the same wages he earned sealing military emblems at the hospital's occupational therapy unit.

Fentress bypasses the institutional supper most afternoons. He calls the unit to let them know where he is, and heads for what he sees as his own quiet little corner of the facility: a bluff that overlooks the harbor. There, he watches the people move about on their boats, free to enjoy themselves.

Last year, Fentress got his own room, with a bed, desk and dresser. It is one of only two single rooms in the 36-bed unit. His parents have since given him an air-conditioner, and he keeps a VCR and his collection of tapes locked in a trunk under his bed.

When he has to be indoors, he spends most of his time here, reading books, keeping a journal, watching his all-time favorite movie, "Casablanca."

• • •

The psychiatric reports on Albert Fentress are voluminous.

The therapists who have studied and treated Fentress believe that he was acutely psychotic during the crime, but suffers now from a more ordinary personality disorder. His diagnoses: obsessive / compulsive disorder and narcissistic personality disorder.

Friedman, his psychologist, calls Fentress "near normal. If I had to make a choice, release him. But it must be contingent on continued monitoring and therapy. The stresses in the world are different than they are in here."

Everyone has a different theory on how someone can have a fleeting psychotic episode — just long enough to brutally kill and cannibalize someone — and within weeks or months return to a high functioning state, free of any

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A Happy Facade, a Secret Life

SMITH from Page A3

the prospect of raising her two sons alone seem, to some, to have been too much for Smith to bear.

"I think she snapped, she just went off," said Tammy Tuttle, 21, a lifelong friend.

Thoughts of suicide raced in Smith's head as she drove around in her 1990 Mazda Protege on Oct. 25, she reportedly told Union County authorities.

But instead of killing herself, Smith told police, she pushed her car off a landing at John D. Long Lake, with her two boys still strapped into their car seats.

Union County Sheriff Howard Wells said the children were still alive when the car sank into the lake's murky waters. Yesterday hundreds of people, some coming from as far as Charlotte, N.C., converged on the banks of the lake to try to make sense of the tragedy.

"In my heart I can't believe it's true. I had to come here to make it real," said Beryl Good, 32, of Union, who was sitting on the grass with her two sons, Darren, 10, and Sidney, 2.

Unable to look away from the water, Pam Howlett, 34, who lives nearby, spoke through tears about her late son, Jason, who died when he was 5 from heart complications.

"I buried one four years ago, but it wasn't because I killed him. I'd do anything to have him back," Howlett said. "He suffered for five years, and she just runs hers in the river."

As the townspeople prepared for last night's wake of Alexander and Michael, the lakeside was transformed into a makeshift memorial ground.

Single flowers, wreaths, crosses, balloons and teddy bears were all left in the children's memory. Many people openly wept, others shook their heads in disbelief. Some expressed their pain through words.

"Sleep well in peace," read a card left by an anonymous person from Minneapolis. "The angels will protect you now," read another from New Orleans.

The somber mood on the pristine shores changed rapidly with the arrival of televison crews and talk show host Oprah Winfrey, who conducted interviews while surrounded by a crowd of onlookers.

Smith's family members, meanwhile, gathered at the home of her mother, Linda Russell. Overcome with grief, they declined to speak with reporters. The boys' funeral is to be held this afternoon.

After Smith's father's suicide, her mother married a man named Bev Russell, who until several months ago owned a local hardware store. The Russells were longtime friends of Sheriff Wells — the man who would eventually arrest their daughter for murder. Wells lived only houses away from Susan Smith.

As a teenager, Smith was known as bright and compassionate, working with the less fortunate through the local Red Cross and the Special Olympics. She was a good student and a member of numerous academic clubs and was voted Friendliest Girl when she was a senior in 1989.

Friends said Smith's first true relationship came when she met David Smith, a fellow worker at the Winn-Dixie supermarket. Smith was three months pregnant with Michael when they married in 1991. The couple appeared happy to the residents of Toney Road, a street lined with small ranch houses.

"You never heard any shouting or yelling from there," said Mode, who lives across the street from the Smiths' house.

Yet there were problems in the home, with Susan Smith filing for divorce from her husband in September after catching him in an affair. Despite their estrangement, David Smith came to the house nearly every day to see his boys.

"This divorce thing was news to us. She told me they were having some problems. She told me that she had asked him to leave. I prayed every day that they would work it out for those kids," said next-door neighbor Alice Valentine.

Yesterday morning the children's wagons and toys were still outside the now-shuttered red brick home.

Valentine remembered little Alex as a boy "who always broke into a big smile." She and her husband, Earl, described Michael as shy.

"He was a mother's baby. He stayed with her and wouldn't come out to play without her," said Earl Valentine.

The elderly couple broke down and cried several times during an interview. "I pray to the Lord for some peace of mind that maybe they drowned suddenly," Alice Valentine said. "Maybe they didn't have to lay in that water screaming, trying to get our of those seats. That would be so bad."

Alice Valentine said she went to the Smith home just days before the boys were killed. She recalled that Smith was happily cooking a southern meal, complete with black-eyed peas and cornbread.

"She had Alex in her arms while she was cooking, and he started wiggling," Valentine said. "Susan told him, 'Now, Alex, I'm going to have to put you down because you're going to get burned, and I don't want to hurt you.' "

Killer's Quest Is Question of Sanity

INSANITY from Preceding Page

thought disorder.

He has needed medication only once — weeks after the arrest when he became very depressed in jail. "I was holding on by my fingernails," he said.

Since then, he has dealt with his grief head-on, sitting through painful sessions of psychoanalysis, letting the tears come forth."People are unable to look at my situation and say 'this man didn't want this to happen,' " he says, "For you to go insane so many things have to be awry that, if you do get successful treatment, you're just not the same person anymore."

Some of his therapists ascribe the attack to deep-rooted Freudian-type stuff: hatred of father turned against a male stranger. Cutting off a man's genitals represents hatred; eating them represents wanting to become the father, to gain his love, Train explained.

But other theories abound, as well:

- A brief, reactive psychosis in response to a build-up of stress. The obsessive-compulsive personality disorder made him too rigid. The narcissistic personality disorder left him feeling victimized. His excessive vulnerability to criticism and victimization, layered onto his rigid veneer, made him snap.
- The dissociated state was caused by psychomotor epilepsy, a condition that could send a person into a dreamlike state.
- The murder and cannibalism represents ancient myths about the power tribesmen gain from eating another man's genitals. (Perhaps Fentress picked up some of these myths as a young boy growing up in Venezuela, one doctor said.)

Fentress says he has worked hard to come to terms with the crime. "The public has never seen that I've tried to become a human being again, to set a path for myself where someone will benefit from what I do," he said.

The former history teacher says that he was so tightly wound and so emotionally weak that an accumulation of stresses tripped an internal switch, and he simply lost control. He believes what may look like a sex crime was a much more primitive lashing out at himself and his father.

"How sick it was that I felt he had to die to save myself. . . to destroy what was destroying me," Fentress once told his doctors.

On a rainy summer day, he and a reporter were sitting alone in the computer room, discussing intimate details of the night he killed and mutilated Paul Masters. Doctors had said Fentress was remorseful over what he did, and has many times discussed ways to communicate his feelings to the Masters family.

The reporter told Fentress that Barbara Masters, who was fighting a lethal form of cancer, said that she has "forgiveness" for him, though she still opposes his release.

He wept openly. Without a word, he then closed the door and shut out the lights. The room was still. After a few moments, the lights went on, and the door opened.

"You okay?" the reporter asked.

"Yeah, I'm okay. You've given me the best news I've ever had," Fentress said.

Dr. Veena Garyali, the hospital's clinical director, said that she has been reading in the medical reports for years that Fentress is ready to go.

"After how much time do we say rehabilitation is enough?" Garyali asks. "Not one incident in fifteen years. No violent acting out. He's never required restraints or medicines. How much do you have to prove that he's not dangerous?"

* * *

Fear remains in the local community. It's a frightening crime, because it has no connection to normal, everyday life. Take a chance he is OK, even a small one? Not with my children, neighborhood people say.

"Just keep him locked up," said Melanie Haley, a 32-year-old mother who lives close to the hospital. "Anybody would have to be mentally ill to do that," she says of Fentress' actions. "You can't excuse it."

Haley and a handful of community activists have launched a crusade to keep Fentress behind locked doors. She was instrumental in gearing people up with signs and banners to form a human chain around the hospital last March, just prior to the hearing for unescorted visits.

She and others wrote and signed form letters to Sen. James Lack and Assemb. Robert Wertz. In turn, Lack and Wertz wrote to the commissioner of mental health to oppose the unescorted furloughs and also contacted the Suffolk district attorney and the courts, asking that the petition be denied. The politicians also urged community members to write to the courts, which they did.

Calls to Lack's office were not returned.

In 1989, the two politicians were also asked to speak at a meeting held at a local school to address problems at the hospital, including the Fentress sightings.

Last July, county Legis. Michael D'Andre sent a press release saying that he has obtained foot patrol for the town to protect "against any dangers or threats that might be associated with the possible release of cannibal Albert Fentress and / or other misfits . . ."

Civic association leader Szurnicki said that Fentress has enough freedom. "No one is denying him the right to fresh air. . . . But I don't think anyone should risk him doing that again."

"I feel like I've learned to cope with stress," is Fentress' response. "But my fight to get out is now a political thing. Senators are sending letters to constituents, community civic leaders are organizing human chains. They don't know anything about me."

For now, Fentress' case is in limbo. He has asked the hospital and the state to resubmit his bid for unsupervised furloughs, but it remains unclear how quickly that will be done.

Tomorrow: A look at the Insanity defense statewide

Apple, IBM Settle on PC Design

COMPUTER from Page A10

tween the two giants. In 1991, the two companies joined with Motorola in an attempt to break the PC industry duopoly of Intel and Microsoft by producing the PowerPC, a revolutionary microprocessor generally acknowledged to be faster and simpler than Intel's Pentium microprocessor.

Intel produces the microprocessor chips used by most IBM-compatibles, while Microsoft dominates the software industry with products such as Windows.

Additionally, Apple recently said that it would strike a licensing deal with IBM and Motorola, although the details are not expected to be a part of the announcement.

The much-hyped unified PC isn't expected to be on the scene until 1996 at the earliest.

Selection may vary by store.